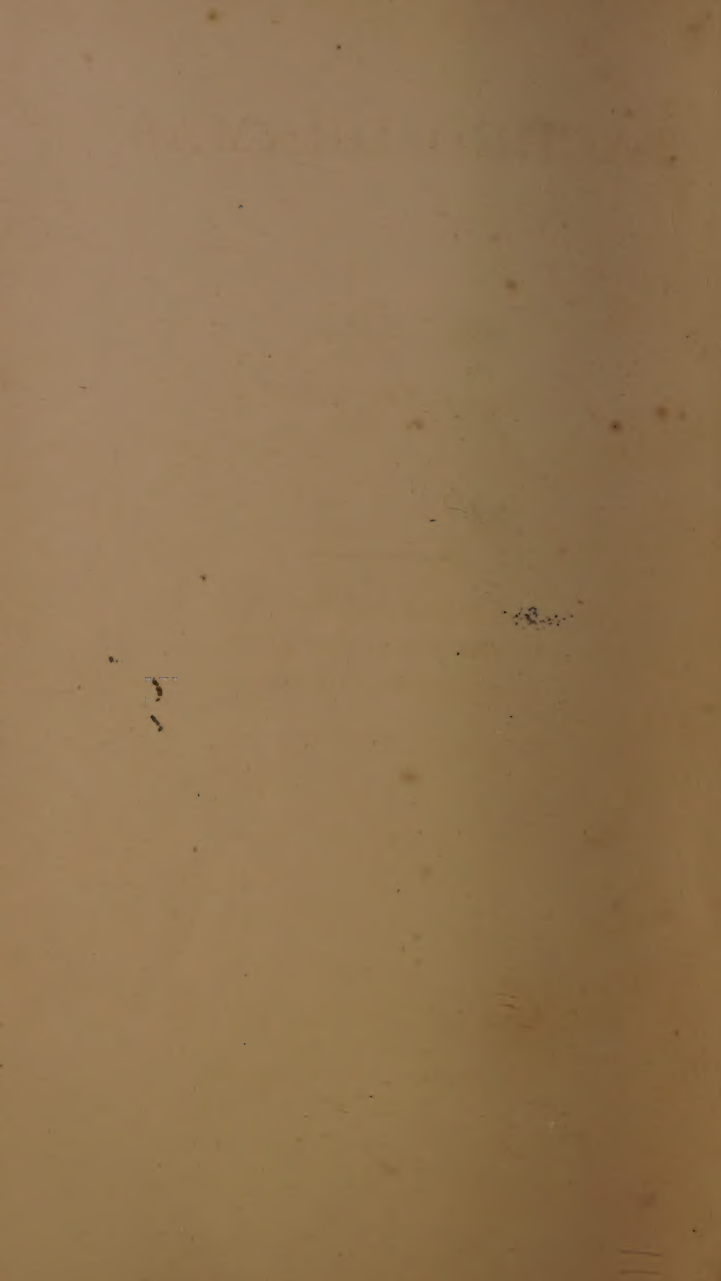


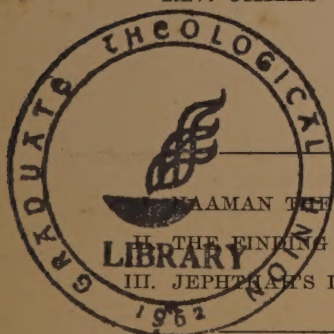
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SACRED DRAMAS.

BY
REV. JAMES BOXER.



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DEDICATION.

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE design in dramatizing these incidents in sacred history is, that, by a series of word-pictures, the beauty of sentiment, and the workings of human nature, contained in a brief text, might be elicited, and that animation and energy might once more be given to those actors in real life. The drama based upon the history of Greece or Rome brings forth the characteristics of men as they stand alone, — the plaything of passions, or the sport of interest; but the Hebrew incidents associate man with the Deity, and show the workings of the human heart under that force divine we term “religion.” That the mind might become transferred to the past, and live in fancy through events which give to the actors a reverence, and have afforded instruction and strength of heart to many of earth’s children when struggling with the strange circumstances which sometimes assail mankind, was one wish of the writer in producing these. The author considers them as being more character-lectures than as claiming any thing higher; that, by pleasing and instructing at the same

time, the nobler life of men and women might become stimulated, and an effort be made to reflect the pure and the beautiful. Experience places it beyond debate, that scenic representations possess a natural charm for most persons, seeing they enlist both the eye and ear to aid the mind in grasping a picture over which the soul may linger, and drink in delight, or a chastened sadness, as feeling alternates from what is before them; but to get such entertainments so pure that they may become auxiliaries to raising the tone of popular thought and desire, has been the difficulty. The drama is a power none can afford to despise; and, by such as labor for the public good, a force so popular should be utilized to attain the end desired.

Without ever thinking of publishing these efforts of my pen, I wrote "Naaman, the Syrian," that by the study of it I might control the taste of my young friends, of both sexes, for the drama. Their taste was dramatic; I could not suppress it; and to save it from becoming vitiated I undertook to guide it in enlisting their services to represent this beautiful and pathetic story. For months I toiled with them; until at length, in costume strictly Oriental, to suit the piece, they made their *début* in a public hall for a benevolent purpose. The design was severely criticised by all classes of religionists, who, nevertheless, permitted their curiosity to command their presence at the entertainment; and the effort was a great success. The beautiful Bible story stood out before them a living fact. The audience was melted to tears by the pathetic, and aroused to admiration by the nobler parts. The call was for another effort; and a

response was given in the more simple one of the "Finding of Moses." "Jephthah's Daughter," as it appears in this volume, has not been represented: preparations were being made for doing so, when a great fire consumed, among other property, the public hall.

Thus what was simply designed for local relief, I now, under stress of circumstances, send forth upon the tide of popular taste to seek for friends. The motive prompting the act was good; the result of the work has been good; and that it may yet be of further service, is the humble desire of

Your obedient servant,

REV. J. BOXER.

SING-SING VILLAGE, N.Y.,

June 28, 1874.

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NAAMAN THE SYRIAN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



JORAM	<i>King of Israel.</i>
PHINEAS	<i>Captain of Guard to the King of Israel.</i>
ABIATHAR	<i>A Priest of Israel.</i>
NAAMAN	<i>The Syrian Captain, a leper.</i>
OFFICER	<i>Of Naaman's Guard.</i>
1ST SOLDIER	} <i>Syrians.</i>
2D SOLDIER	
GEHAZI	<i>Servant of Elisha.</i>
SIMEON	<i>Friend of Gehazi.</i>
ELISHA	<i>Prophet of Israel.</i>
JEZEBEL	<i>Dowager Queen of Israel.</i>
TRYPHOSIA	<i>Wife of Naaman the Syrian.</i>
PHYLLIS	} <i>Servants of Tryphosia.</i>
PRISCILLA	
REBECCA	<i>Mother of the Little Maid of Israel.</i>
ANNA	<i>Little Maid of Israel.</i>
SOLDIERS, CAPTIVES, TRUMPETER.	
SPIRIT OF DREAMS	{ <i>Who visits Naaman in the hour of his deepest despondency.</i>

NAAMAN THE SYRIAN.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Terrace or Garden Scene.*

Enter JORAM, PHINEAS, ABIATHAR.

JORAM. Syria still refuses to submit her haughty head to Israel; and Ben-hadad vaunts his strength in open defiance.

PHINEAS. 'Tis true, my liege; and Phineas blushes that such report must thus be made.

JORAM. This state of things affects us all, lowers the standard of Israel's pride, and rends from our nation the mantle of former glory.

PHINEAS. And Judah laughs, that with two tribes she can hold her own, while we with ten bow to the insolence of Syria.

JORAM. It is always so with the unfortunate: it is the penalty we must pay for being too weak or too cowardly to breast the torrent of events.

PHINEAS. Too cowardly, my liege! As the cloud from the desert rising suddenly, and obscuring the light of the sun, thus making night of mid-day; so the words "*too cowardly*" shade my soul

in feelings of deepest gloom. Not too cowardly ! Has my lord forgotten how recently the soldiers of Israel trode down the sons of Moab, and erased their names and memories from the book of life ? Better, far better had it been that the blood of Phineas had dyed the field of strife, than to live to hear such words from the lips of Israel's king.

JORAM. Peace, Phineás. I thought not to cast reflection on thy personal valor ; neither doubt I the bravery of Israel's host. But Syria is a thorn which festers in our side.

ABIATHAR (*aside*). It is because the Physician is withdrawn.

JORAM. Speak, mumbling priest, and let your words reach the ears of royalty. This aspect of thine bodes no good to our royal person. Yet let me tell you that king-craft takes the place of priest-craft now in Israel.

PHINEAS. Nay, my liege : 'tis but a priest.

ABIATHAR (*aside*). " 'Tis but a priest ! " This deep-mouthed bloodhound knows no strength but force of arms.

JORAM. Speak ! I command you, priest ; and let your words be as fair before us, as you are wont to boast your deeds are to the eye of Heaven.

ABIATHAR. Time was, most noble Joram, when Israel's priests commanded reverence.

JORAM. That was because Israel's king had lost the power to rule. But what did you mutter ?

ABIATHAR. My lord, if truth may be spoken in the presence of royalty, I simply said that Syria is a festering thorn in Israel's side because her Physician is withdrawn.

JORAM. Speak more plainly.

ABIATHAR. It is this, then, — that Israel's King hath left her.

PHINEAS. This sounds of treason. Is not Joram Israel's king? or is a conspiracy being hatched in the nest of priestly influence? My lord, your royal mother would have taught these priests better manners.

JORAM. Peace, Phineas! Speak without enigma, priest; for, by our royal beard, if but the slightest proof of faction doth appear, I'll repeat the Tishbite's remedy for the cure of priest-craft.

ABIATHAR. My lord, far be it from any priest of the temple to plot against the sovereign of God's chosen people; but my thoughts rolled back to the time when the Ruler of her kings dwelt in the midst of Israel.

JORAM. Does he not do so now? Has not Israel's monarch, that he might maintain peace among all parties, yielded to have destroyed the altars and the groves of Baal? and is not his life one scene of domestic annoyance, caused by the indignation of Jezebel our royal mother, for what she chooses to term a proof of weakness in acting thus? What more would you have done?

ABIATHAR. Faults but half cured leave the offender still condemned by Heaven.

JORAM. Have I not supported the reformation so far as I dare push such a policy? and it would be most impolitic to go beyond it.

ABIATHAR. They who reform from policy are likely to *recant* for convenience.

JORAM. How, then, would you have us act?

ABIATHAR. From principle, my lord.

JORAM. Aha, aha! Were I inclined to humor, your simplicity would move me to mirth. Who ever heard of rulers governing upon abstract principles? It is the prerogative of kings to make their own morals; to transmute policy into principle, or principle into policy, to suit the times. But priests are too abstract in their notions: they only know ideal men, born of their own brains, while the real world lies beyond the range of their cloistered life.

ABIATHAR. Yet, my liege, they form not their own code of right and wrong, but demand the practice of that law received from Him who has stamped the right with his own broad seal of truth. Had the golden calves of Dan and Bethel but shared the fate of the groves and altars, Israel might still have laid tribute on the surrounding nations.

JORAM. It is not for kings to debate, but to command; and on the peril of losing our royal

favor, which has long borne with your reproaches, I charge you never again to repeat the demand for removing the golden calves. You may not see the necessity for the policy I pursue; but Israel is a fickle and a turbulent people; and I must employ religion to wait upon my will in ruling them. Understand, then, that henceforth the priests of Israel must lead religion in the policy of her king, or her king may deem it policy to make for the nation a religion. Come, Phineas, let us review that troop of horse, but newly mounted on their steeds from Egypt; for, with all our reverses, I still have more faith in the swords of soldiers than in the prayers of priests.

PHINEAS. Hear that, priest! Our swords cut flesh and bone; but your prayers only saw the air. (*Exeunt JORAM and PHINEAS.*)

ABIATHAR. O Israel! how is thy glory faded, and thy strength subdued! Time was when nations trembled at thy name; and before thy prowess, Heaven-endowed, kings feared and sought thy friendship. Then the holy people dwelt securely; and from their midst went forth the light of truth. But now thou art fallen, debased, and the very sport of peoples whose resistance to thy former strength would have been but as a feather to the whirlwind. Thy king is infidel, thy soldiers libertine, and thy priests despised. Would that these aged eyes had been closed by the cold

hand of death, ere I had lived to see that day when the religion received from that terrible Sinai should be deemed a political convenience for serving the purposes of a base and degraded king! Were the people wise, rulers would shape their course in righteousness; for Heaven has appointed the abode of a nation's welfare within the place of purity. Hark! I hear the call to prayer. I will hasten to the temple, and before the altar plead with Heaven to undertake what man refuses to regard. (*Exit ABIATHAR.*)

SCENE II. *A Peasant's Cottage.*

(REBECCA and ANNA. *Curtain rising, shows REBECCA standing disconsolate in the middle of the stage. Enter ANNA, approaching and kissing her mother.*)

ANNA. Hail, my dearest mother! The eye of morning opens in rays of glory; and hill and valley, clothed in the splendor of the rising sun, bid all nature join the chorus of their song, and fill my young heart with ecstatic delight. Let us raise our morning hymn to Heaven. Why weepest thou?

REBECCA. This day is one of sad recollections, and opens again the wound which time has failed to heal. Let me repeat the story you have often heard: 'twill ease my widowed heart. Thy father

was one of Israel's soldiers, bold and brave, devoted to his country's cause, and ever ready to obey her call in the hour of danger. 'Twas then, as now, the time of Israel's need. The Syrian, ever restless foe of our nation, had summoned her to battle. Thy father heard the call. Leaving his plough in the field, and girding on his sword, he hastened to the rendezvous. "Good-by, Rebecca!" were his parting words: "I shall soon return." Yet as he spoke I thought there to be a trembling in his voice, so different to its usual firmness; while in his dark eye, flashing with fervor, stood the shining tear. He left our cottage, but quick returned as though to look again on all around; and, as he pressed my lips with the parting kiss, I felt that it would be his last embrace. It was, alas! too true; and the morning of this day is the anniversary of that sad hour, when they crossed the threshold with his stiffened form. He fell in battle. He sleeps in a soldier's grave; and this little memento (*showing trinket*) is all that is left me save yourself.

ANNA. I shame me for my thoughtlessness! I should have known that on this day my father died, and joined in tears with you at early dawn.

REBECCA. Thou wert but a babe, and have no recollection of thy worthy father.

ANNA. 'Tis true, — too true! The name of father is to me as the sound of pleasant music

I have heard of, but never listened to. The word "*Orphan*," harsh, unhappy name, is what salutes me in my play, and is ever foremost in a neighbor's kindness. But, my mother, I have a father in Israel's God; and you have a husband there. Hush, then, your sighs, and bid your fears depart.

REBECCA (*embracing ANNA*). Child of my love!

ANNA. It is now the hour when the maidens go to the well. I'll haste me thither, and quickly speed me back.

REBECCA. I have an instinctive dread of your removal from me: let me bid you stay.

ANNA. My darling mother, there is no need of fear; and, were I to remain from the well, not being sick, I should become the theme for gossip and for laughter.

REBECCA. Have a care, my child.

ANNA. I will, and shall soon return. (*ANNA takes a pitcher, and leaves the stage.*)

REBECCA. My spirit is clouded with apprehension: my heart is oppressed, as though in the presence of some unseen and awful danger. Can it be the result of my recollection? and have I become nervous in thinking of him who is gone? Away, intruder! Frightful suggestion! That child will come to harm? Impossible! It cannot be: 'tis a delusion. O thou divine Benefactor, spare my child, not crush the widow's heart! (*Shouting without.*) Hark! what noise is that?

(*Women and children rush across the stage, shouting, "The Syrians! The Syrians!" — Screaming without.*)

REBECCA. My child! My child!

Enter ANNA, running, followed by Syrian soldiers.

ANNA. Mother, save me! save me!

REBECCA (*throwing herself between the soldiers and her child*). Help! Help! My child! My child!

1ST SOLDIER. Out, woman! nor hinder me in the discharge of duty.

REBECCA. Oh! spare my child.

2D SOLDIER (*aside*). Have a care! That she-bear of Israel will fight for her cub.

1ST SOLDIER. Woman, resistance is in vain. I would not wish to harm you, being a woman, but the girl is my lawful captive.

REBECCA. Soldier, have you a heart, the heart of a man, the heart of a father? If so, spare my child.

2D SOLDIER (*aside*). He may have a heart; but no one knows exactly where to find it.

1ST SOLDIER. Woman, your appeal is vain. I will not regard you; nor could I if I would. Stand back, nor force me to employ severer means.

2D SOLDIER (*aside*). Now she'll go at it.

REBECCA. Wilt thou, then, rob me of my child, my only hope and joy, and be more cruel than the

power of death? Were I a man I would teach thee there was spirit left in Israel! But the men of my nation are craven, and flee before their oppressors, leaving thee none but women to contend with.

1ST SOLDIER. Woman, your talk is vain. This child is my prisoner: I'll use her well, and guard her from all harm. As a man I have a heart which feels your sorrow: as a soldier I know of nothing but my duty. (*Trumpet calls.*) Come, little one: I hear the trumpet call. (*Seizes the child.*)

ANNA (*turning to her mother*). My dearest mother, we must part. Fain would I plead until my eyes wept tears of blood, that I might stay. O soldier! canst thou not leave me to her I love? I am her only consolation and her stay. In taking me you take her life. Take all we have; but leave *me*, for my mother's sake.

1ST SOLDIER. Come along!

ANNA. Farewell, home; farewell, mother! This separation forms a new day in our existence, which opening in clouds may yet end in sunshine. Trust, then, to Heaven, and to that power which led our fathers through the sea. One kiss: adieu!

1ST SOLDIER. Hasten hence! (*Drags her off the stage.*)

(*Exeunt SOLDIERS and ANNA. REBECCA follows them to the wing.*)

REBECCA. Gone, gone! Come, death!

(*Curtain falls.*)

SCENE III. *Street scene. Captives assembled in the street of Damascus, chained, and leaning listlessly around, forlorn.*

1ST CAPTIVE. (*Man.*) This is the result of war, — torn from our homes, banished from those we love, and with the dread of an unknown future crushing from our hearts all hope.

2D CAPTIVE. (*Woman.*) Had Israel's sons the valor of former times, we had not been here.

1ST CAPTIVE. Peace, woman. To cast reflection on all that is left fond memory to cling to, is but to increase our sorrow. Far better to think of our people as unfortunate than cowardly. To impose upon ourselves a fiction, in our condition, is happier than to contemplate a graver fact.

2D CAPTIVE. Still I say our men are cowards.

1ST CAPTIVE. And I say it is not true.

2D CAPTIVE. I say it is; and were it women at fault you would say so too.

1ST CAPTIVE. I say it is not; and your foolish talking does but add to our misery.

2D CAPTIVE. I—

ANNA. Peace, peace, my people. Is this the time for companions in misery to engage each other in bitter dispute? Have we not all of us enough to endure apart from this? My heart bleeds: mine eyes are red with weeping for her, that mother, now perhaps cold in death, whom I

have left behind. You, too, have dear ones to whom you are lost; and shall we aggravate our misery by a coarse and useless reflection? Rather let us, by words and deeds of kindness, strive to relieve our mutual distress.

Enter 1ST SOLDIER.

1ST SOLDIER. Up, captives, for Syria's captain, the mighty Naaman, comes this way. (*The captives stand up in order.*)

Enter NAAMAN and OFFICER.

OFFICER. It is, as I told my lord, a mode of warfare which presses Israel close, and touches Joram to the quick.

NAAMAN. Still I do not approve of it. The necessity of the times may mitigate the evil of such doings; but I do not war with women. In stern battle, when men engage with men, however hard the contest, I am willing to take my chance for strength of arm, and to award the honor of the victory to the greatest strategist, or the most enduring. But this kind of warfare suits better the wolf, which prowls among the defenceless, and secures his prey. Nor is it policy thus to act; for, grant it true that Israel yields to the instant pressure of events, the constant friction of such losses as wives and children will arouse the veriest coward among them. Should such be the case, we shall have to fight with madmen; and who dare

say the tide may not then turn? In being a soldier, never forget that you are a man.

OFFICER. I did but obey orders.

NAAMAN. I blame you not. You have done your duty, and discharged it well. But I detest the practice. Is this your spoil? (*addressing 1ST SOLDIER*).

1ST SOLDIER. These are our captives, noble Naaman.

NAAMAN. I have seen you lead, as prisoners of war, foemen more worthy of a soldier's name.

1ST SOLDIER. 'Tis true, my lord; and I would that time would come again, or that the soldier's trade should cease.

NAAMAN. You have no relish for this mode of fighting?

1ST SOLDIER. To catch and kill lions is a work worthy of the strength and courage of a soldier; but this hooking of lambs makes me tender.

NAAMAN (*placing his hand on the head of ANNA*). Whom have we here?

1ST SOLDIER. It is a lamb of Israel, my lord; and were I a man, without being a soldier, I had left her by her mother's side.

NAAMAN. Her face is beautiful.

1ST SOLDIER. My lord, it is not her face which moves my heart; but it is that her father was a soldier.

NAAMAN. Soldier, I praise you. A soldier's child should ever draw kindness from a soldier's heart, although he be an enemy. (*Addressing ANNA.*) Speak, little one: what have you to say?

ANNA (*holding up her chained hands*). Nothing, my lord, but that the God of Israel wills my present condition.

NAAMAN. You are a young philosopher.

OFFICER. It is so with all that peasantry; and this makes them so hard to subdue.

NAAMAN. The courage of a people is raised or depressed by the purity of their religion.

1ST SOLDIER. It is true, my lord; for it makes a soldier's eyes weak to hear this little one at prayer.

NAAMAN. What is your name, child?

ANNA. Anna, my lord.

NAAMAN. I have a mind to buy your captive of you, soldier.

1ST SOLDIER. To you, my lord, she is free from charge.

NAAMAN. Anna, I will take you to my home; and you shall wait upon my wife. She will be glad to have a maid thus sensible. Can you sing?

ANNA. I can sing the Hebrew songs which our good David made when Israel's king. (*Chants 23d Psalm.*)

NAAMAN. Those mighty songs, which once made of Israel a nation of heroes! Some of them

I know ; and never recite them, but they stir within my soul nobler emotions, and make me desire to know more of that God whose praises they contain.

ANNA. I will teach you all I know of him.

NAAMAN. I must be careful how I speak with you on such a subject, or you will make a Hebrew of me. Come with me, then. (*Exeunt* NAAMAN, OFFICER, ANNA.)

1ST SOLDIER. I have done my duty by that child, and thus saved a soldier's honor. Come, let us back to our quarters : there will be no more sales to day. (*Exeunt all.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Palace of Israel's king.*

Enter JEZEBEL and JORAM.

JORAM. My mother, duty calls me to revere the parent to whom I owe my being ; but life is intolerable in thy royal presence.

JEZEBEL. Well had it been for me hadst thou not been born. It shames me that he whom I call son should be a slave and coward. Had the courage of thy mother, rather than the chicken heart of Ahab, dwelt within thy bosom, thou wouldst be free.

JORAM. Is not freedom the prerogative of Israel's king?

JEZEBEL. Free! thou free! 'Twould move me to mirth, wert thou not my son, and the occasion grave; yet, even as it is, it sounds ludicrous to hear thee talk of freedom. Thou free? Listen, while I recount the fetters restraining thee, and then say by what name thou wilt describe thy condition. First, then, the king of Syria by his deeds of valor holds thee forth to public scorn before the nations. He laughs sarcastically, and says, "Joram — poor weakling, the inthrall'd of priests and people, dragged by their caprice through humiliations coarse and cutting — reigns monarch of a once glorious nation, only by my sufferance. He is the dove, and I the hawk. He sports by my permission; and at my will I can destroy him." This, then, is one chain that binds thee, the chain of satire, than there's nothing more galling to the noble heart. But thou art craven: thy skin thickens under the sluggish working of thy coward spirit, until a soldier's spear could scarcely pierce thee, that thou mightst feel. Then there is another chain, that of popular clamor; and before this thou crouchest as a whipped cur. Thy dainty soul cannot endure the sound of vulgar breath, fetid with leeks and garlic; and thou shrinkest from the encounter as a timid child listening to a ghost-story on a tempestuous night.

This rule of the people is the death of kings; and thou diest in kingly influence, a coward's death, being too weak to resist their will. Did I but hold the reins of Israel's government for one short month, I would quickly drive the unwashed mob back to their dens of vulgar toil, and with a troop of horse teach them the salutary lesson, not easy to be forgotten, that when kings speak the people should stand in awe. Another chain that binds thee is the chain of priest-craft. Did ever Baal's prophets dictate to Jezebel? Had one of them but looked a negative to my purpose, I would have hung him in mid-air, a feast for vultures. But, under threat of denunciation from those usurping priests thy father re-instated at the dictates of the Tishbite, thou tremblest, and art afraid. Oh for the power! and I would make the stream of Kishon red with the blood of priests slain in retribution. These are the chains which bind thee; and now wilt thou call thyself free?

JORAM. Have a care, lest I forget the mother in the woman, and, to prove my courage, condemn thee as a traitress.

JEZEBEL. I laugh thy threat to scorn; yet 'twould be well to see thy courage, though I paid my life for the sight.

JORAM. Wert thou but *wise*, it would be well to consult thee in this time of need. But thou art passionate; and in thy rage reason is torn to rags.

JEZEBEL. 'Tis the result of thine inactivity. There can be no desire stronger in a mother's soul than the welfare of her son. Over him she watches in infancy ; in childhood she nurses him ; in youth, — for his future, — a mother's brain fills with scenes prospective, fair, and great ; and can there be a feeling more fervent than for his present welfare ?

JORAM. I grant thee intensity of emotion ; but calm thy passion, and advise me here in private. Listen, while I tell you that the nation is on the verge of revolution.

JEZEBEL. A mere term, coined to frighten coward kings. Revolution ! yes, I would make the heads of the leaders revolve ; but it should be in tumbling from their bodies by a blow from the executioner.

JORAM. This cannot be ; for, since the scene on Carmel, the people have been rising in consciousness of power, until they now threaten the throne itself.

JEZEBEL. The people ! how disgusting the word ; and pray who are the people, but the common herd made to be driven at their master's will ?

JORAM. You speak as matters once stood, and without recognizing the change which has taken place.

JEZEBEL. I speak as things would be, were I

in authority ; but you have brought this sorrow on yourself. And now I see but one way of relief.

JORAM. Name it.

JEZEBEL. Choose out some trusty friends of the common sort, — men as faithful to the hand which pays them, as the leopard to his feeder ; men with long tongues and brazen faces ; men whose patriotism, stirred at the sight of gold, burns fiercely ; men with brawny arms, broad chested, and with throats that can send forth sounds loud as the bellowing of a Bashan bull. Send these among the people to inflate their pride, and to arouse their so-called patriotism by retailing imaginary wrongs. This will prompt them to open acts of violence, and justify your interference for the common good. Having stirred them up to perform some public deed contrary to law and order, then sweep down upon them with the household troops ; and at the sight of blood they'll run for very life, and, trembling at the mention of your name, yield themselves quietly submissive.

JORAM. The remedy is severe ; but the evil is extreme. Here comes a messenger.

(*Enter MESSENGER.*)

MESSENGER. My lord !

JORAM. Speak.

MESSENGER. My lord, to the king's enemies belong the truth I have to tell.

JORAM. More sorrow. Another incursion of the Syrians ?

MESSENGER. It is even so, my lord.

JORAM. What have they now done?

MESSENGER. Burnt villages, and carried captive the people.

JORAM. Is the thing known in Samaria?

MESSENGER. My lord, I fear so; for as I passed by I saw groups of persons gathered at the street corners, engaged in loud debate.

JORAM. Now is the hour that I must win my crown, or lose my power. (*Exeunt JORAM and MESSENGER.*)

JEZEBEL. At length his thin blood seems stirred to vital heat. 'Tis well. Better the tempest which arouses to energy, than the sunshine that produces indolence. Had he my Tyrian blood, he would hold the throne of Israel for his children; but now the sceptre will slip from his hands, unless the gods prevent. Still I have done my utmost to move him, and must now wait events, the doom of which seems shadowed on my soul. (*Exit JEZEBEL.*)

SCENE II.—*A room in the house of NAAMAN the Syrian. Enter NAAMAN, dejected, and walking slowly on to the middle of the stage. He stops, and points with the front finger of his right hand to a spot on his bare left arm.*

NAAMAN. Has it come to this? Is this to be the end of Syria's noble captain? O ye gods of

my nation! why did ye spare me through the din of war, that I might die a leper? A leper,—a loathsome, disgusting leper. Can it be that I, the foremost on the field of battle, the dread of Syria's foes, the beloved of her brave host, should be a leper? Leper! is there a sound more nauseating? Can imagination devise an object more repulsive, more abhorred? My brain is all on fire: my heart swells as though it would break in agony of grief and humiliation at the dreadful sound. O thou noble reason!—the lamp the gods have lighted in the soul to teach us submission to the laws of fate,—drive the darkness of despondency from my mind, that I may read with steady gaze the words, “Naaman the-leper!” Bitter sound! what more disgusting? The slimy, crawling snake; the creeping lizard; the cold-blooded frog; the bloated spider; and all things which being touched make the flesh of men to creep and tremble on their bones,—are not so repulsive as the name of—leper. At the very mention of it the air becomes polluted; and a trembling seizes all who think upon it. Yet I must wear it. It must henceforth be my name among my friends. My soldiers must know me by it. The gossips in the street, the old men sunning themselves by the side of the house, and the wretched and deformed beggar who whines out his daily cry for alms, will henceforth talk of—Naaman the leper. Nor are these all to whom

this name will be familiar; but mine enemies — they who trembled and fled but at the thought of my presence — will dance, and rub their hands in glee, at my misfortune. The inflammation widens: the disease spreads, and slowly yet most surely, marches its way across my entire body, until the whole shall become a mass of putrefaction. Can I endure the thought? The reflection maddens me! O thou Arbiter of the fate of mortals! loose thy thunderbolts, and strike me to death, rather than such should ever be. I hear footsteps approaching. (*Enter TRYPHOSIA, and maidens PRISCILLA and PHYLLIS.*)

TRYPHOSIA. Naaman, my lord —

NAAMAN. Back! Back! Come not near me; for I'm a leper.

TRYPHOSIA. Can it be? Do not my ears deceive me? My lord, permit me to approach.

NAAMAN. Back! Back! for death rides upon my very breath.

PRISCILLA. He raves.

TRYPHOSIA. What malady has seized my husband's brain, that he should refuse to have me near him? Can it be there has befallen him that worst of evils, insanity? — that power which most reduces manhood, that drives him forth beyond the limit of the brute, and makes of the demigod a drivelling idiot or a raging destroyer. Naaman, my lord, listen to words of affection from

one who loves thee, and bid me conduct thee to thy couch. Thy brain is overtaxed ; and a little rest in the quiet of sleep will restore thee. (*Approaching him.*)

NAAMAN. Come not near me, lest I smite thee to earth. Better, far better, to see thee dead at my feet, than thou, too, shouldst become a leper. See here — but approach me not — the fatal mark, the brand of the angry gods, — the power which severs me from my race, and casts me out loathsome and abhorred. Look ! then flee from hence, and, leave me to wander forth a fugitive, until death or other helper shall release me.

PHYLLIS (*aside*). He is a leper, Priscilla. Let us haste away ; it is contagious.

PRISCILLA (*aside*). Hush !

PHYLLIS. My face is all my fortune ; and, should the plague-spot seize it, I am doomed to remain unmarried. I cannot stay. Oh, come !

PRISCILLA. Hast thou no affection for thy lady ? and is thine heart so callous that thou wouldst leave her in distress ?

PHYLLIS. But I shall never get married.

PRISCILLA. Thou art her servant : stay !

PHYLLIS. She only hires my hands, not my face : my face is all my fortune. Come !

TRYPHOSIA. Go, my Priscilla. Leave us to ourselves ; for we are ruined.

PRISCILLA. Never, my lady.

TRYPHOSIA. How have we provoked the gods, that they should deal thus hardly with us? What have we done? Is it a sin to be prosperous? for we have been. Is it a sin to win honors? for they have fallen to our share. Is it a sin to have friends? for we have gained them. And what have we neglected, what remains undone, that the Fates thus seek our ruin? Once more I ask thee, noble Naaman, to bid me lead thee hence. I fear not death with thee. Better to die together, than to live separated. Come! and if I have thy malady, well: I shall but suffer in the discharge of duty. (*Approaching.*)

PRISCILLA. Stay, my lady! Not you, but me. My life is of less worth than yours. If I am stricken there are none to care for me.

PHYLLIS (*aside*). She is too old to think of marrying.

NAAMAN. Back! all of you. I command you hence. Retire.

TRYPHOSIA. Bid me stay and share your sorrow.

PHYLLIS (*aside, pulling PRISCILLA*). Come! I feel my face growing hot: the leprosy will seize it. My face is all my fortune.

NAAMAN. I know thy love, Tryphosia; have proved its faithfulness for many years, and esteem it more than life. But, should I permit thee to approach me now, 'twould cancel every noble

deed I have performed ; and, in recollecting me, men would write me down a traitor to a loving heart. Retire, and offer sacrifices for my recovery : it may be that the anger of the gods can be averted.

TRYPHOSIA. Wilt thou force me hence ? If I *must* leave thee, these eyes shall have no sleep, nor shall slumber approach my couch, until I have appeased the wrath of high Heaven by alms and sacrifices. (*Exeunt TRYPHOSIA and maids.*)

NAAMAN. They are gone ! I, too, will hasten hence, and bear my fate in silence, until death or other helper shall relieve me. Yet it is possible that the petition offered by her purity will prevail with Heaven. I will use my patience. The gods may be propitious to her cry, and send me health, or grant that I may die. (*Exit NAAMAN.*)

SCENE III. — *Street-Scene.* TRYPHOSIA *returning from the sacrifice she has offered for the recovery of* NAAMAN. *Enter TRYPHOSIA and PRISCILLA.*

TRYPHOSIA. No answer comes. Yet the priest says the sacrifice augurs well, and urges patience. How easy to call to virtue from the place of rest, but how hard to perform when most required ! It is as those standing on a promontory, watching the frail skiff as she battles with the surging billows, and saying, " Her helmsman should do this or that ; " forgetful of the fact, that what

seems easy from the distance becomes harder to perform when near at hand. Still, I *must* have patience ; for in the exercise of patience my hope retains its strength. What said the messenger from my lord, Priscilla ?

PRISCILLA. He said that the progress of the disease was stayed.

TRYPHOSIA. Said he no more ?

PRISCILLA. Nothing, but that no further change had taken place.

TRYPHOSIA. Let us, then, believe such tidings to be the first streak of a happier dawn, and hasten home, that with fresh prayers we may prevail with Heaven. (*Exeunt TRYPHOSIA and PRISCILLA.*)

(*Enter PHYLLIS.*)

PHYLLIS. The world always denounces, as ungrateful, persons who will not sacrifice themselves to suit its humor ; forgetful that they who blast their future or kill themselves, to indulge the whims of others, cannot live, nor be restored to life by the praises showered upon them for their doings. Praises are very well ; but they are too thin to form a substantial good, and often die upon the very lip which gives them birth. I love Tryphosia as much as does Priscilla : only I take a more sensible way to show it. She doesn't care if she catches the leprosy, — not she ; and then would have us think that her love for Tryphosia led her to become a martyr. But I know better. The

fact is, she has been disappointed in her attempts to catch that soldier of the guard; and, having grown tired of life, she doesn't care what becomes of herself, and would rather be a leper with some one to pity her, than to live an old maid and be despised. But, because I will not support her in this notion, she curls her lip in scorn, and, looking gravely on me, says in solemn tones, and prefaced with a sigh which seems an infant whirlwind, "Phyllis, 'tis wrong in you to be so ungrateful as not to be willing to sacrifice yourself to serve the good Tryphosia. By this you show a disposition to be base and selfish; and how can you expect to prosper?" Heigho! what pious fits some persons have when convenience suits! Their virtue is born of circumstances as the flowers of spring; and, could their spring but change to winter, their virtue would fade away. I do not wish to be selfish. I would serve Tryphosia night and day; but I think I ought to serve myself a little. I have thought much over this matter; and this is my serious conclusion, that for a young girl like me, just opening into life, it is better to strive to catch a husband than to catch the leprosy, although some husbands would be as great a plague. But there is some one waiting for me. Don't tell. (*Exit PHYLLIS.*)

(*Enter ANNA.*)

ANNA. They have been kind to me, and by

their sympathy have removed the pang of being separated from her I love. But should I excite hopes that may never be realized, and tell of a deliverance that may never come, this would be to subject myself to scorn and hatred. Yet gratitude demands that I should something risk. I have heard our people speak of the doings of Israel's prophets,—how Elijah raised the widow's son to life, and that our Elisha healed the bitter waters of Jericho with a little salt. He can cure my lord,—I feel he can; and, were it for no other reason than that he has been the friend of the fatherless, I feel that Israel's God would bless him. Shall I do it? Dare a child risk so much confidence in God as to advise the remedy? I'll venture, trusting in the Lord. (*A voice calls, "ANNA!"*)

ANNA. I come. (*Exit ANNA.*)

(*Scene changes to the room of TRYPHOSIA, who is reclining on a couch. Enter ANNA, bringing fruits.*)

TRYPHOSIA. 'Tis past the hour that thou shouldst tend me.

ANNA. I crave pardon, my lady.

TRYPHOSIA. Wilt thou, as Phyllis, forget me in this hour of sorrow?

ANNA. Far be it from me thus to act, my lady. (*ANNA affected.*)

TRYPHOSIA. I fear my words have hurt thee, child. I would not do so, seeing my own heart is riven by the power of grief.

ANNA. It is not so, my lady: it is for you I feel.

TRYPHOSIA. Could one-half who sympathize with us help us, we should soon obtain relief.

ANNA. Forgive me, my lady, when I say I think I can.

TRYPHOSIA. You help us!

ANNA. Not I, my lady: I can but show the way.

TRYPHOSIA (*rising*). Strange child! and do thy feelings play upon imagination, until thou thinkest thou hast a cure? Thousands of nostrums have been prescribed; and hast thou one imported from the Hebrews?

ANNA. Bear with me, my lady; for 'tis gratitude prompts me thus to act. Your kindness to me has been mentioned in my prayers to Heaven. I have told the God of the Hebrews that Syria's noble captain has been kind to Israel's orphan child; and I feel that He has heard me. Acting in his fear, I now say, were my lord with the prophet who is in Samaria, he would recover him of his leprosy.

TRYPHOSIA. It is impossible!

ANNA. It is true, my lady.

TRYPHOSIA. But shall we seek a remedy from our foes?

ANNA. In the hour of battle, a foeman's life lies with the combatant: he may kill or spare, as suits his skill in war, his opportunity, or his personal safety. But, in the matter of disease, humanity defies all laws of chance or caprice.

TRYPHOSIA. Could I believe your statement true, 'twould fill my heart with hope, and give new life and energy to my existence.

ANNA. 'Tis true, my lady. Oh! listen to my words, and tell my lord the remedy.

TRYPHOSIA. He would despise it.

ANNA. Grant me, then, permission to visit him; and, at the peril of my life, I'll plead with him, nor leave him until his consent is gained.

TRYPHOSIA. I'll think on thy words. Now leave me. (*Exit ANNA.*) That is a strange child! From the first I saw her I became moved by her appearance; but the earnestness she now shows for our welfare speaks a genuine affection. How strange the remedy she suggests! Is there the remotest possibility it could cure my husband's sickness? Did I but think so, I would tell him, though it should subject me to lasting scorn. Yet I have heard of the mighty doings of the Hebrew's God,—what wonders he is said to have wrought in ancient days; and who can tell? I'll think it over; and it may be that some unseen power will guide me to a successful resolve.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Street Scene.*

(*Enter GEHAZI, advancing to the middle of the stage, and pointing with his finger to the ground.*)

GEHAZI. That's my shadow, — the only thing in the world that I can call my own. But even that is like a rich man's friends, mine no longer than the sun shines. I was born poor, and have not disgraced my birth; for I am poor yet. But this is no virtue on my part; for, had the opportunity to get rich been laid before me, I might not have retained my purity. Yet it is as well as it is; for, having nothing, I can lose nothing. How hard divinity may be, I have no knowledge, that being my master's business. But being a prophet's servant is not so easy; for, like the ass which grinds in the mill, it is a constant going from here to there, and then around again from there to here. But, the longer I live, the shorter I shall have to live: so that at the last, things will come out square. My master often says to me, "Gehazi, work while it is called day." But I think to myself, I don't mean to call it day nor night nor week-day nor sabbath, that, by getting rid of the days, I may get rid of the work also. When I was born, Nature said, "Gehazi is not made to work." But circumstances, being absent when

the word was given, didn't know of it, and so impose it on me. Yet, choosing rather to follow the dictates of nature than the imposition of circumstances, I just do as little as I can. Now is my hour.

(*Enter SIMEON.*)

SIMEON. Ah! Gehazi?

GEHAZI. The same, my worthy Sim, Simmer, Simeon, Simmeron; thus it is you are only half done; you are only parboiled. You Simmeron, but you never thoroughly boil. Well, how goes the world with you, my worthy Simmeron?

SIMEON. You are sharp, Gehazi; but I know of something which will put you in a stew, and hash you up afterward. As to how the world goes with me, I cannot tell, not being a philosopher; but I go on in the world from waking to sleeping, from eating to hunger, and from drinking to getting thirsty again quickly, — that is, if I meet Gehazi with an as in his pocket.

GEHAZI. I admire wit, even in you, Simeon. Let me see: in our money, one as makes four quadrantes; and ten ases, a denarius. But, if we are to make an as between us, then you are the four quarters, and I the tail, — that is, unless you can get me to treat you; and then you may consider me an ass entirely.

SIMEON. You will not do so?

GEHAZI. Look me in the face, and ask me that question again.

SIMEON. You will not do so?

GEHAZI. These ears are long; but large ears are a sign of intelligence when they are not pointed; and, before you will get me to quench the spark born in your throat, you must wait for your cups until I get my pints.

SIMEON. Hast heard the news?

GEHAZI. I heard that the sun which got up this morning is likely to go to bed to-night.

SIMEON. That is more than your mother's son would do, if there were a skin of wine around. Hast heard nothing else?

GEHAZI. Nothing. The world is as empty of news as it is of goodness.

SIMEON. There we differ.

GEHAZI. What have you heard?

SIMEON. That the king of Syria has sent his captain, who is a leper, for Joram to cure him; and Joram has sent him to E— (*Coughs.*) I cannot say more: my tongue is parched.

GEHAZI. Speak, man!

(SIMEON *shakes his head, and coughs.*)

GEHAZI. Speak, man! (*Shakes him.*)

(SIMEON *shakes his head, and coughs.*)

GEHAZI. This is a pretty job! Here am I dying for news; and news is dying of thirst. What is to be done? I have an as; and I'll make my reputation for generosity ride it into the next wine-shop, and exchange it for a cup of wine.

that I may save news from perishing. This is a work of goodness worthy of a prophet's servant. Come, follow me, and let us wash out a pathway through which news may travel. (*Exeunt GEHAZI and SIMEON.*)

(*Enter NAAMAN and COMPANY.*)

NAAMAN. Can it be that I am mocked,— that a delusion born of my strong desire for health has led me on to disappointment? What said Joram?

OFFICER. When I presented the letter of Ben-hadad, our royal master, Joram turned pale, and thought it to be a plot to draw him on to war, and thus seek his ruin. Turning to his courtiers he said, "See how this man seeks a quarrel against me! Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that he hath sent this man unto me to recover him of his leprosy?"

NAAMAN. He cannot do it. Then is our journey vain; and I have come but to exhibit myself as sport for such to whom my name was once a terror. This is the lowest point of degradation I can reach. Now let me die. O Syria, would that my life had ended on thy soil! then had I been spared the humiliation I now feel. But better to fall in the streets of Samaria by my own hand, than to die here being overcome by an enemy. Farewell, hope! Bear my love to Tryphosia. Ye gods, receive me! (*Draws upon himself.*)

ALL. Stay! Seize him! (*Officer seizes his arm.*)

OFFICER. My lord, have patience.

NAAMAN. Out, dog! Wouldst thou have me live to be the sport of slaves? Is this thy love to Syria and to me, that thou wouldst see her captain humbled in the presence of her foes? The gods approve the doings of the man who cannot live, having the courage to die.

OFFICER. But they approve most the man who wrestles with sorrow in the strength of patience until all hope is past.

NAAMAN. Hope *has* fled me, and left me a future only filled with sorrow.

OFFICER. My lord, I had not finished my report.

NAAMAN. Speak on, then, and let me know the worst; for heaven and earth conspire against me.

OFFICER. When Joram had ceased speaking, a messenger, in appearance a priest, was ushered into the royal presence; and while gasping for breath, from the very haste he made, said, "Send the man to the prophet of Israel; and he shall know there is a God among the sons of Jacob." My lord, let us now to this prophet, nor forsake hope until hope abandons us.

ALL. 'Tis wisely said.

NAAMAN. I submit rather because ye wish it, than for any hope I have.

OFFICER. By sunrise to-morrow morning will the prophet see us. (*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE II. *A night scene. An interview between JORAM and ELISHA. ELISHA'S tent supposed to be pitched outside the city, in an adjoining wood. Night. Lights turned down. Wood scene, showing ELISHA'S tent in the wing.*

(*Enter JORAM and PHINEAS.*)

PHINEAS. My lord, these night movements suit better the soldier than a king.

JORAM. Yet, when the brain is burdened with the weight of care, personal inconvenience sits lightly. He who sways a sceptre will find no pleasing task. The life of a monarch ruling such a people as is made by the Carmel Reformation is one of plot and counterplot. That kings may live at ease, the people must dwell in the blindness of ignorance; for, if once the light of intelligence but permeates the smallest chink of the human mind, it creates a life, which, gathering strength from its own respiration, makes a people restless beneath any rule themselves cannot control. The choice of government with an enlightened people will never be monarchical. A nation being free must become enslaved by avarice, by luxury, or by ignorance, before they will choose a king. We are the creation of necessity; and, that we may live, the greatness of a free people must

become extinct. This road is hard to travel. Are we near the place?

PHINEAS. I think I behold it in the distance but it is too dark to see far in advance.

JORAM. I dare not say I fear; yet this darkness produces thoughts unfriendly. Scenes of assassination and cruel murder haunt my brain. 'Twould be the hour for the partisans of Jezebel to despatch a king born of the reformation, did they but know that we are here. What noise was that? 'Twas the sound of human voice! My heart seems more timid at this hour than at any moment since my childhood days.

PHINEAS. My lord, it was nothing but the night wind passing through the trees.

JORAM. Let us hasten! (*Draw nigh to the tent of Elisha.*)

PHINEAS (*calls*). Elisha!

GEHAZI (*coming from behind the tent*). Who calls?

PHINEAS. Who art thou?

GEHAZI. By a good chance I am my mother's son, and am therefore somebody; but, if chance had made me her daughter, I had been — well, I shouldn't have been her son, that's all. But who are you?

JORAM. Silence, thou ass head!

GEHAZI. He has learnt manners.

PHINEAS. 'Tis Joram, Israel's mighty monarch: he seeks Elisha.

GEHAZI. Gentlemen, if you have come to rob my master, let me tell you that he has nothing but what he carries on his back, and that is not worth a shekel ; for, a prophet being an unworldly office, there is but little profit to be derived from it. And if a prophet be as poor as a beggar's dog, how rich suppose you must be his servant ? Gentlemen, if robbery be your business, you have come to the wrong place.

PHINEAS. (*Strikes at him with a sword.*)
Perish, wretch !

GEHAZI. Help ! Help ! (*Elisha comes from within the tent.*)

ELISHA. Who dares break in upon my meditations at this lonely hour ?

PHINEAS. It is the king.

ELISHA. Speak ! Art thou Joram ?

JORAM. It is I.

ELISHA. What brings thee hither at this hour ?

JORAM. Affairs of state.

ELISHA. What has a prophet to do with matters of this kind ?

JORAM. Much ; for, however indirectly they may move toward the point of politics, yet by their teaching they color the public mind, and give such a complexion to the cast of thought, that only those wearing a certain hue will be entertained.

ELISHA. Admitting this, — yet what have I to do with state affairs as now controlled in Israel? and why do you seek my counsel? Is not a prophet despicable in your esteem? and are we not a set of tools, to be employed as may suit kingly convenience? This is thine own assertion: what, then, can bring thee from thy luxurious couch to visit me at such an hour?

JORAM. I claim the right to rule in Israel; and, by our royal beard, ere that right shall be wrested from me by an usurping power, whether it be priests or people, I will drown the nation in its own blood. Have I not, since the reins of government were placed within my grasp, sought the welfare of my subjects? In the foreign war with Syria I have been unfortunate, but I have prevailed over other nations; while at home I have sought to relieve the people, by practising such economy as to threaten me with being despised by my very courtiers.

ELISHA. Art thou come to tell me of thy virtues and thy proud resolves? I could have been content to have heard these at a more favorable hour, and in another place. Thou art not so modest that thy goodness must be whispered beneath the canopy of night, lest virtuous blushes should sink thee in confusion. If darkness is sought, that thou mayest tell the tale of thine excellence, it is because thou fearest the light of

day would paint falsehood on thy brow. Thou art the enemy of that nation which it is thy proud boast to call thyself a friend. Start not, nor curl thy royal lip in scorn; for the heavy frown of kingly indignation will not make the heart of a prophet tremble.

JORAM. Dare you defy me, and charge me with being a common liar? Can I endure it? Did I not search deeper than thy words, into the feeling which gives them birth, and at their source learn to show sympathy toward the mis-shapen things as they appear, I would hurl upon thy race the royal whirlwind of destructive force. But thy bitterest words are only the venomous creatures born of a heart canopied with disappointment. There they are lively, and sting most the mother who gives them birth; but in coming into light they are harmless enough. The reformation has disappointed thine order. It was then thy thought that dominant power would be grasped again by priestly hands. But never shall this be while Joram reigns.

ELISHA. The forces of a nation are at thy command; and thou canst do to me as suits thy will. These arms thou canst bind with chains; these limbs thou canst place in fetters; this body thou mayst cast to the dogs: but still my tongue shall tell thee truth; and when even that falters, and sinks into silence beneath the touch of death, my

soul shall still bear witness against thee. Thou art an enemy to Israel ; for a ruler who despises religion is a traitor to his subjects, and a hater of the human race. I have told thee truth : now do thy worst.

JORAM. I came not here to quarrel, but to tell you that Syria's king hath sent to me a man to be cured of the leprosy. I am no doctor of skin diseases, and have sent him to you. Will you cure him ?

ELISHA. Mocker of sacred things ! even to the power miraculous imparted by thy father's God. Not for thy sake would I cure him.

JORAM. That may be ; but I thought I would like to know thy caprice on this matter ; for if he is not cured I must prepare for war. This brings me here to-night, that I might escape the common gaze, and from thine own answer be prepared to act.

ELISHA. For Israel, land of my birth, country of my love, my heart is riven, and bleeds in anguish at her condition. Could I again endure the sight of seeing her cities pillaged, her villages consumed, and her noble sons lying blood-stained on the field of strife, stiffened beneath the icy touch of death ? Could these ears again endure the sound of the mother's sobs, the widow's cry, and the orphan's wail ? Could I again follow by the rays of the pale moonbeams loving hearts,

as they turn over the ghastly dead in search of a fallen friend? Thyself and thy race shall perish, God-accursed! The weapon for thy destruction is now being formed in the forge of the future. The hammer of events employed in framing it rings upon my prophetic ear; but my country shall be spared the bitter scourge. Take this as thine answer; and I leave you. (*Exit ELISHA.*)

JORAM. These priests will yet arouse me to a point that's past endurance; and, should they do so, I will sweep down upon them with a force greater than a prophet's word. Yet we have gained our desire in coming. He will cure him; and for his bitter words, I'll treat them with royal contempt, as being simply those of a man whose judgment is rendered crooked by events. Come, Phineas, let us hasten back: there is no fear of war.

PHINEAS. I am sorry for that, my liege; for a soldier's glory lives on the field of strife. Let me lead the way. (*Exeunt JORAM and PHINEAS.*)

(*Scene changes. The tent of NAAMAN, supposed to be pitched in another part of the same wood. NAAMAN sleeping in his tent. SOLDIERS on guard around it.*)

(*Enter SPIRIT OF DREAMS.*)

SPIRIT. The ways of Providence are mysterious. In human life the darkened vestibule often

leads to the chamber of light and joy. The deeds of men are weighed in the balances of heaven, and reward or punishment dealt out as they preponderate. In judging of human deeds, Heaven is pitiful. The charity evoked by lofty virtue reduces the magnitude of mortal weaknesses; and the great Arbiter deals most actively with what is in affinity with himself. 'Tis thus he deals with Naaman. His kindly sympathies with human sorrow, his ever ready help for the distressed, and his noble courage in doing what is right, stand as the genius of virtue, pleading for him before the Purest. Heaven is moved when virtue pleads; and lofty sympathy responds, although the form it assumes may not be the most attractive. (*Draws near to NAAMAN.*) Naaman, victim of doubt through blessing long delayed, over whose mind the veil of sorrow now is drawn, a brighter future waits thee. Write, said the Eternal, upon the page of Naaman's life, the words, "deep affliction;" but follow it with scenes of brightness, honor, wealth, friends, and best of all with further knowledge of Myself. Hush, then, thy sighs, poor sufferer, and bid thy fears depart; while, Heaven-commissioned, I pass across thy brain vision of things to come. (*Touches his forehead with a golden rod.*) I touch thy mind with the warmth of celestial fire, that under its influence imagination may be fired, and catch in

prospective glance what is written for thee on the tablet of the future. (*Touches again.*) Thou art now in the wilderness, on the banks of a turgid stream, whose brawling waters leap from rock to rock in foaming cascade, and then depart to meander o'er the plain. They invite thee to plunge thyself into their pellucid bosom. (*Touches again.*) Thou art now in; and the cooling stream flows gratefully around thy fevered and leprous-eaten frame. Plunge once more. Again, until seven times. (*Touches again.*) Another scene. Thy body is now refined, purged from the leprous filth; and flesh and skin are soft and clear as an infant newly born. At sight of this, joy o'erspreads thy features, and delight has made thy manly brow her throne. (*Touches again.*) The vision changes. Thou art now at home, encircled in the fond embrace of her who loves thee dearer than her life. Friends gather around thee; honors are showered upon thee; and the voice of sweet music fills thine ear. (*Low music.*) This scene make thee weep. The fires of doubt and despondency, that dried up thy joyous spirit, are now quenched by returning health; and the stream of delight once more makes the human eye its channel to the world beyond. All now is pleasure. But one scene more. (*Touches again.*) See, amidst the festive throng which greets thee, yon little slave. (*ANNA enters, and*

stands as a shadow by his side.) 'Twas she who pleaded for thee with her God ; and he, who hears the orphan's prayer, regarded her petition. Send her home to her land honored and blessed. Thou art now in the act of sending her ; and thy quivering lip tells that a soldier's blessing is following a soldier's child. 'Tis over now. (*Exit ANNA.*) Back ! back, ye visions, into the future, to await thine hour. Thy task is for the moment done : thou hast awakened hope. In this way the Spirit of Dreams fulfils the will of Heaven, — brings forth the future, lays it on the mind to awaken hope, then sweeps it hence, leaving but the faintest trace for fancy to preserve or to distort, and for mankind to call it, in contempt, a dream. The morning breaks ; and I must hasten hence. (*Exit SPIRIT.*)

(*Trumpet sounds. Lights turned up. NAAMAN awakes.*)

NAAMAN. Is it but a dream ? So plain it seemed, and such reality, that I must needs yet think it true. But mine eyes dispel the illusion ; and the light of morning discloses the hideous fact that I am still a leper. Yet the happy fantasy that filled my brain leaves behind it some lingering rays of pleasure, as though one of the gods from the high empyrean throne, redolent with ambrosial perfume, had passed me by during the hours of sleep, and cast the odor of his presence

on to my defiled senses. It seemed so true, and yet is so delusive! Oh, cruel mockery of dreams! the creation of the fancy uncontrolled. Thoughts past, thoughts immediate, and hopes and fears, commingle in strange confusion, and bring forth scenes horribly grotesque, or delusively fascinating. Oh that my dream were true! But I am still the abhorred of friends,—the contempt and mockery of every slave. Yet my reason holds, though stretched by mortification to its utmost tension. Would that the strings of my heart would break, or that my brain would fail! for then, either in death or as a maniac, I should forget my sorrow.

(*Enter OFFICER.*)

OFFICER. Naaman, my lord.

NAAMAN. What now?

OFFICER. It is the hour when we should seek the prophet of Israel.

NAAMAN. It seems but a wild delusion,—the suggestion of a conspiracy between heaven and earth to mock me with disappointment.

OFFICER. Say not so, noble Naaman, nor yield to despair, till every means have been tried, and failed. Bear with me, when I say that on the field of battle, I have often seen thee so surrounded with thy foes that hope seemed gone: yet didst thou escape and triumph over all.

NAAMAN. That case is not kindred to my

present state. There I had the resources left me of brain and courage: but in this I am powerless; and all that thought and will can do affect me nothing.

OFFICER. Yet thou wilt go.

NAAMAN. Did I simply consult my feelings, no; but, should I refuse to try every means, the fools who will mock me, should they fail, would then hold me in contempt, as cowardly and infidel. If I succeed not, I shall be laughed to scorn: if I refused to try, I should be despised. It is thus the world will ever act with the unfortunate; and the only road to popularity is success.

OFFICER. 'Tis true: the end, success, reduces in general esteem the roughness, and even crookedness, of the road leading to it. But will my lord hasten?

NAAMAN. Lead: I follow. (*Ex't NAAMAN and OFFICER.*)

SCENE III. ELISHA *standing in front of his tent.*

ELISHA. When the mantle of night is cast upon the earth, and the hush of silence settles down upon the busy world, 'tis then the spirit of man, released from worldly toil, struggles to fall back upon its divine source in intercourse with Deity. Man's soul is the respiration of the living God, which, as his agent, lives and guides a world. 'Tis thus that in the night God oftener talks with

man in the lowly whisper of his spirit voice, and fills his soul with inspiration superhuman, inexpressible. This emotion now presses upon my spirit; and beneath its touch I tremble. It is the God within the man, — the strugglings of the Infinite for utterance through the creature. Beneath its potent force my frame becomes exhausted; my brain is fired; my heart leaps in pulsations almost greater than mortal can endure; and my mind, illumined with future scenes, grasps distant objects as though they were present with me. This feeling makes me shudder. It is a struggle between my nature as a Jew, and my duty as a prophet. To yield to the former would please me well: to yield to the latter is the command of God. This throws me for aid upon the Eternal. I look to heaven; and from that source there comes to me a holy calm, which, resting on my spirit, strengthens my sober reason. Thus, to do God's will, man must sometimes deny himself. Heaven purposes alone, and seldom lets his creatures into his design until the hour of execution. Even then he shows but a portion of his plans, and taxes submission at a point where neither sympathy nor reason can assist our effort. To do God's will is to yield the lesser to the greater, conscious that the greater is wise and just, even when the circle of his claim cannot be grasped by our feebler intellect. In being a

prophet my manhood is not ignored; and, as a man, I am a patriot. Is it, then, a matter for surprise, that this affliction of Naaman, disabling him from prosecuting war, and cutting him off from active life, should be no cause of sorrow to me? As the greatest foe of my people I could see him with tearless eye dead at my feet. As a man it would please me well: as a patriot it would be a matter for exultation. But the will of Heaven rules above human interests and human passions, as the sun shines above the clouds, and teaches me that the patriotism which confiscates humanity receives no favor from his hands. In our sacred books it is written that man is but two removes from Deity; and, such being the case, no local cause, however dear to me as a Jew, must not over-ride the general claim upon me as a man. This makes my duty plain; and, being instructed by inspiration that I must cure Naaman, it shall be done; and, as Heaven does, I must leave it with his conscience to esteem or to abuse the kindness he receives. Naaman must be restored; but I fear the remedy will be too modest for his military pomp.

(Enter GEHAZI.)

GEHAZI. Father, the Syrians have come.

ELISHA. Name thine errand quickly.

GEHAZI. The Syrian lion has run into the snare of the Hebrews.

ELISHA. Speak plainly, I command you, on the peril of arousing my indignation.

GEHAZI. Naaman, that demi-god of the Syrians, is sick, and has come to Samaria to get a physician. I regret that I have not yet gained my diploma, or I would advise blood-letting.

ELISHA. Dare you be so base as to injure even an enemy when sick?

GEHAZI. Father, I would not. But an enemy is a sinner; and none dare shrive a sinner without he repents and reforms. Now, Naaman being a sinner, I would pardon him did he reform; but, to make his reformation sure, I would despatch him to such a distance from the scene of his former doings, as to place him beyond the temptation to apostatize.

ELISHA. Who is that yonder?

GEHAZI. It is the servant of Naaman.

ELISHA. Bid him approach. (*Exit GEHAZI.*)

(*Enter OFFICER.*)

OFFICER. Holy father, the sympathy of a man toward his friend, of a servant toward his master, makes me bold in my approach. I come from the mighty Naaman, whose name is too well known in Israel, that thou shouldst cure him of his leprosy. Heaven has afflicted him with that greatest scourge of mortals, which drives him forth abhorred of men, and shunned by his dearest friends.

It was in Syria we heard of thy power, and from a Hebrew maid, to whom Naaman has been a second father. She told us of thy skill, and of the power bestowed upon thee by the God of Israel. We believe thee capable of doing all that she has said; and as the possessor of such ability we entreat thee to exercise it for his deliverance from that fearful curse.

ELISHA. Thou art the servant of Naaman. Would I could have met thy master face to face, and have bearded Israel's greatest foe! But Heaven forbids it. It is doubtless wise; for He knows best what mortals can endure, and foresees that in the patriot I might forget the prophet. Soldier, I have heard thy request. Whatever Naaman may be to others, to you he is good; and, in judging of men, always pronounce on what you know, rather than on what you may chance to hear from the lips of strangers. As a man I have no power to cure your master. Yet as the servant of Israel's God, he hath endowed me with the commission to say, Thy captain shall be cured. But he who enters Heaven's favor must bend low, must make humility his companion; for in the garment of humbleness man must wait on God to receive his blessing. Return, then, to Naaman, and tell him to wash seven times in the river Jordan, and he shall be cured.

OFFICER. Father, is this all?

ELISHA. What more wouldst thou have?
Retire. (*Exit OFFICER.*)

(*Re-enter GEHAZI.*)

GEHAZI. He has gone off as upright in form, and with a countenance as pleasant, as that of a man who has taken an early breakfast off sour grapes.

ELISHA. Peace, Gehazi!

GEHAZI. Forgive me, father. I can but laugh to see the Syrian crouch: 'tis time for a nation's joy. Elisha bitters a cure for Syrian leprosy,—ha! ha!

ELISHA. Peace, Gehazi! Begone!

GEHAZI (*leaving the stage*). I am glad to get turned off, that I may get another look at the wry face of that Syrian. Ha! ha! (*Exit GEHAZI.*)

ELISHA. The remedy is not mine, but God's. Truth is often as bitter to him who imparts it, as to them who receive it. The tenderness of man is not always consulted by the voice of Truth. Yet 'tis wise to submit to it, though it should wither our most towering conceit, and bring us low in self-abasement. He whom the truth throws down, having courage, may arise again upon a firmer basis, and in a purer form. (*Exit ELISHA.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *Wood Scene. Enter NAAMAN and train.*

NAAMAN. Said he no more? Is it thus that Syria's captain is to be despised? Let us hasten home, and fan the flame of hostilities between the nations from this studied insult, until Syria, aroused, shall drink herself into mad intoxication with the blood of this servile race. Sound the march! for I am resolved that the ignoble blood of this base crew shall drench the soil it is too thin to fructify were an ocean of it spilt. The stream cannot rise above its source. Their origin was slavery; and the meanness of their former state cleaves to them as a second nature. 'Tis born within them; 'tis woven around their constitution by the hand of Fate, nor can the power of time remove it. Perish the entire nation! and that, too, by the hand of Syria's host. Must I repeat it? Sound the march! and let us away from this land, where I am made the gazing-stock of fools, who mock me in the very twinkling of their eyeballs. *Go wash in Jordan!* Miserable turgid stream! And does the dotard think the mighty Jordan queen of rivers? Ignorant plebeian! and so destitute of the common courtesies of life, or so conceited by the thought of fancied power, that

he disdains to see me. Is the device he practises on these stupid boors so ill concealed as not to sustain the gaze of more enlightened eyes? or is he fearful, that, seeing through the pretence with which the charlatan holds them spell-bound, I should smite him to death? I thought he would surely come out, and strike his hand over the place, and call upon the name of his God, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar better than all the waters in Israel? Forward, march! (*Trumpet sounds.*)

OFFICER (*falling before NAAMAN*). My lord, kill me, but believe I love thee! Show me the danger I would not breast, show me the death I would not face, to save thee, noble Naaman. Thou hast known me in the siege and in the open fight: thou hast seen me marching and in camp; and from thine own lips have I won applause for braving danger in its sternest mood. And now, though thou shouldst kill me, yet hear me speak.

NAAMAN. Thou art a brave man. Arise! speak on; but what is the purport of thy conduct?

OFFICER. Most noble Naaman, had the prophet bade thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith unto thee, "Wash, and be clean"?

NAAMAN. Is this thy craft? Away! for brave as thou art, and much as I love thee, thy life shall pay for further opposition.

OFFICER. Strike! but believe I love thee. Let loyal love for once prevail, and bring thy calmer reason to consider thy command. The remedy, if simple, is but the easier employed; and will my lord remember, that, in all the wonders recorded as the doings of Israel's God, simplicity is marked? The lifting up of Moses' rod drove the Red Sea asunder, and made a pathway through the deep. The touch of that rod upon the flinty rock drew forth a stream to quench the thirst of that wandering host; and, when Jericho was besieged, the walls of that city fell down by the simple sounding of rams' horns. This God of the Hebrews works great things by simple means; and who can tell but that even the Jordan, endowed by influence divine, may effect thy cure? Let love prevail, and try.

(NAAMAN, *pacing the stage as though seized with a sudden thought; stops.*)

NAAMAN. Peace! I shame me. Either it was a dream, or some spirit voice has whispered in my ear. Did I dream it? The scene comes clear before my memory: the recollection of it begets a new emotion in my soul, and revives my hope drooping unto death. Anticipation of better things is already born within me; and under the impulse I feel fresh life. Let us away to Jordan's stream, and try these simple means, which if they prevail will surround the Hebrews' God with all the honor of my cure. (*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE II. *Palace Scene. Enter JEZEBEL and JORAM.*

JEZEBEL. Doctor Joram ! Physician to one of Syria's soldiers, and even fails in that. What unlucky star crossed the orbit of thy course when thou wert born ? I shame me that thou art mine.

JORAM. How would you have us act ?

JEZEBEL. For such as thyself, in the present form ; but, for the man I would be proud to call my son, in another manner.

JORAM. How ?

JEZEBEL. On receiving the letter from Benhadad, I would have torn it into rags, and stamped it beneath my feet. Then I would have arrested Naaman as a spy, and shut him up where none should dread contagion from his leprosy. This done, I would have disgraced his soldiers, and sent them back to tell how Joram defied all fears from that upstart of whom fortune hath made a fool.

JORAM. This would have provoked a war.

JEZEBEL. Better it should do so with thyself defiant, and the first to attack, than to be set upon by Syria's king. Then a well-directed blow might have made him hesitate, and sue for terms ; but now thou hast made thyself a silly sheep, to be driven by that cur.

JORAM. I have sent the man to Elisha.

JEZEBEL. I know it ; and didst act with thine own wisdom ; for, had he cured him, 'twould have given the priest another opportunity to forge a chain to bind thee. This would suit well thy coward, craven spirit ; for to such a slave as thyself the rattling of chains is the sweetest music. But Elisha failed to cure him, and, to hide his weakness, hath mocked the man in sending him to wash in Jordan.

JORAM. Has Elisha failed to cure him ?

JEZEBEL. A diligent king would never make such inquiry ; but the question, coming from one so lazy, so luxurious, and so effeminate as thyself, is only natural. Elisha has failed ; and Naaman has gone off, maddened with disappointment, to stir up the flame of war.

JORAM. How can I act ?

JEZEBEL. Up, and pursue him ere he crosses the border ; make captive of him ; bring him back in chains, and parade him through the streets a spectacle for the vulgar herd, who, seeing him thus manacled, will become inflamed with transient courage, which guided aright may lead them on to victory.

JORAM. The letter Ben-hadad sent me was friendly, though strange ; and shall I be the first to light again the torch of war ?

JEZEBEL. *To light again !* Pray, when was that torch extinguished ? For years it has not been ;

and is only turned down to hide its burning, while he for purposes politic acted as he has done. And will your indifference prevent another war? Nay! it is inevitable; and your only safety lies in being the first to strike. Send forth, then, the conscript; call in the troops from distant fortresses; and, forming an army, make at once an incursion, and carry the blaze of desolation to the homes of Syria. Promptness of action in the time of war gives the strength of half an army; for not only does the swift and heavy blow inflict a grievous wound, but the force of it so paralyzes future action as to afford the finest opportunity for success.

JORAM. Your speech is simply raving. Did I do this without further provocation, 'twould be to bring upon me swift destruction, not only from Ben-hadad, but from the neighboring kings. They all would say, Joram has turned aggressor; and for our own safety we must trample him out. This would lead to an invasion of Israel on all sides, and in the present temper of my subjects to the destroying of our house.

JEZEBEL (*strikes at him with a dagger*). Perish as a dog! It is thy fate. I can read it in thy conduct as plainly as though it were read off to me as the purpose of the gods from the lips of Baal. It is the just reward of thy cowardice. Thy thin blood is as cold as the snows of Lebanon,

and bids defiance to all the force of language. Words are the heated coals which make the blood of brave men boil; but the scurvy liquid in thy veins could not be warmed, were all the tongues of Babel employed to remove the chill. Thy conduct maddens me: my brain is set on fire at the sight of thy cowardice. Let me leave thee; or the hand of her who gave thee being shall take from thee that wretched life, stamped with the curse of the gods for thy father's folly. (*Exit JEZEBEL.*)

JORAM. She now threatens me! Her wild temper is fast consuming her reason; and for my own safety I must keep her in confinement, or I shall perish by her hand in a fit of madness.

Enter MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. Good news, my lord the king!

JORAM. It is the thing we need; for I am weary of the other side. Name it.

MESSENGER. Naaman the Syrian is cured.

JORAM. Is it possible!

MESSENGER. It is true, my liege; and all Samaria is rejoicing. For the popular feeling is, that we shall now have peace with Syria, and that the two nations, dwelling in amity, will encourage trade, and give us all security.

JORAM. We need it. Hasten to get among the people, and encourage the idea. (*Exit MESSENGER.*)

JORAM. To receive a sceptre from the hand of revolution, is to nurse a viper that may sting at any moment; and the dread of it so doing makes of life a wretchedness. In the chaos of transition, when Anarchy stalks forth in grim and unrelenting visage, and hands stained alike with the blood of the base and the brave, it becomes imperative for public safety that authority be invested in some supreme power; and, in the dread of something worse, men choose a king. Yet no sooner does the tumult of excitement cease, than, as coward children who in their fright hide themselves behind a door, and, when all dread of danger's past, kick their hiding-place in mock bravado, as though to show they never were afraid,—thus would they who hid themselves beneath the authority of my name now deal with me. But they shall learn that the quiet which now permits them to play with me in threats and mimic movements of revolt, is but the indifference of contempt, which, being pushed too far, will become aroused, and, as a wild fire kindled amidst a hurricane, shall consume all things in its course. They have placed the sceptre in my hands; and I will hold it with the clutch of death; and death alone shall take it from me. I am glad Naaman's cured: 'twill give me time for other matters; and I will now hunt out the traces of treason which lead the searcher up to the fanatic Jehu. Be it

so. His religious frenzy shall be found no match for my cunning. I will seek again the counsel of my friends. (*Exit JORAM.*)

SCENE III. *Street Scene. Enter GEHAZI and SIMEON.*

SIMEON. Do you mean to say he's cured?

GEHAZI. I do; and my master has let him off without paying the doctor's bill.

SIMEON. Humph! That's too bad.

GEHAZI. It is true. Prophet and doctor. Let every dog carry his own tail. If my master be a prophet, let him remain a prophet and no doctor: if he be a doctor, let him keep to that profession. But it seems to be the law of things, that they who are the greatest doctors make the largest prophets.

SIMEON. What do you intend doing?

GEHAZI. I am going after him to tell him that he forgot to settle the account.

SIMEON. Has your master sent you?

GEHAZI. That all depends upon how you receive it. Hear, now. I say to myself, I have left Elisha's service for the space of two hours; and during that time I shall set up on mine own account. This, you know, makes me mine own master; and, being my own master, why, I send myself: and so my master sends me. Is not this logic?

SIMEON. It may not be the logic of the schools. Yet in the world 'tis used by many fools.

GEHAZI. Well, I cannot stay. Adieu. (*Exit GEHAZI.*)

SIMEON. He is playing a dangerous game. I'd rather be as poor as a beggar's cur, than to be as covetous as he is. He gets; but he never gives, except it be to get. He will give generously enough of his pennies, if he can make each one hatch a shekel. No: I'd rather drink sour wine, and sit in the sun all day, than either by work or covetousness to become rich. As a rule, poor men live longer than rich ones; and, as I love long life, I'll be content with poverty. So much talking makes me thirsty. I will away. (*Exit SIMEON.*)

(*Re-enter GEHAZI, attended by two Syrian servants carrying burdens.*)

GEHAZI. This way, Syrians, — this way. (*Crosses over.*)

(*Enter ELISHA.*)

ELISHA. He thinks I see him not; but I'll pursue him. (*Exit ELISHA.*)

(*Scene changes to ELISHA'S tent. ELISHA standing by the tent. Enter GEHAZI.*)

ELISHA. How now, Gehazi? whither have you been?

GEHAZI. It was so insufferably hot, that it made me feel unwell: so I thought, having an hour to spare, I would walk in the groves, and drink in the cooler breeze.

ELISHA. The heat made thine head heavy; but the cooler air of the groves transferred it to thy back.

GEHAZI. The man is happy who has no burden but such as he can carry on his back.

ELISHA. 'Tis true; but they who bind unlawful burdens on their back may sooner or later find the weight change place.

GEHAZI. Yes, father; and he who carries upon his back, a burden lawful or unlawful, if he be a wise man, will soon change its position from his shoulders to the ground.

ELISHA. Thou art more knave than fool! Went not my heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Thou hast sinned against man, against the sacred office of a prophet, and against the Most High. Thy covetous heart made traitor of thy lips; and they uttered falsehood. This conduct of thine deceived a man, a subdued enemy, a convert from idolatry. By doing this, thou hast dishonored the office of a prophet, in making it appear that a sinister motive prompts us to every generous and pious act. This casts a shadow on our profession: for there is nothing more disgusting in the eyes

of men, than a religious teacher retailing benevolence in words and deeds *only* for filthy lucre. The generous heart of Naaman, made more susceptible by divine kindness, led him to respond even beyond thy claim. But thy covetous doings were marked by God, who saw the glory of his benevolence tarnished by thine accursed vice. It was then the decree went forth. It came to me: it burns within my brain. I tremble as it rises to my lips. My heart bleeds for thee, but my tongue must speak. *The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee, and to thy seed forever.*

GEHAZI. Lost! Lost! Make room. A leper!
(*Exit GEHAZI.*)

ELISHA. Thus insulted Heaven avenges evil, to prove to mortals that there is a God.

TABLEAU.

FINDING OF MOSES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



PHARAOH	King of Egypt.
MAGICIAN	Egyptian.
OFFICER	Egyptian, reading Proclamation.
SOLDIERS	Egyptians.
JUDAH	} Hebrew Demagogues.
REUBEN	
SLAVES	Hebrews.
FATHER OF MOSES	Hebrew.
PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER	Princess of Egypt.
ASENATH	} Companions to the Princess.
LUCRETIA	
MAHLON	
1ST LADY	} Attendants.
2D LADY	
3D LADY	
SLAVE GIRL	
MOTHER OF MOSES	Hebrew.
MIRIAM	Sister of Moses.
SPY	Egyptian Woman.

Costumes Egyptian and Hebrew. Ark of bulrushes for concealing infant.

FINDING OF MOSES.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Palace at Raamses. Enter PHARAOH and MAGICIAN.*

PHARAOH. I am, then, to understand, that, from the occult study of astrology, you predict danger to the throne of Egypt?

MAGICIAN. My liege, it pains me to become bearer of the intelligence, that the motions of the planets which presided at your birth point to the downfall of your royal house.

PHARAOH. By what fate must I become subject to such change?

MAGICIAN. Destiny works by laws: it has its agents in the incidents of life; while the motion of the stars writes upon the tablet of the heavens coming events.

PHARAOH. This fails to answer my question; and I am in no mood to trifle. Such vagueness may serve as sport for men of ease and leisure; but I inquire not for laws but facts.

MAGICIAN. My liege, bear with me, nor think

me wanting in feeling for the future of one to whom the priesthood of Egypt is indebted for the favor it enjoys. This emotion binds my tongue; and I hesitate to impart the full knowledge I have acquired.

PHARAOH (*excited*). Do you deem me coward, and that I shrink from hearing what is written for me in the book of fate? Rest assured of this: that, although *rage* may follow your communication, *fear* shall never mark the conduct of the King of Egypt.

MAGICIAN. I doubt not your bravery; but, when Desolation paints upon the canvas of the future a dynasty overturned, and a king in chains, even the heart of a magician, to whom wonders are no marvel, sinks beneath the sight.

PHARAOH. Cease this trick of your craft, nor employ imagination to portray in hideous forms the tidings you would relate. Why do you seek to weaken courage by apprehension? is it not enough to leave such work to the fact itself? But the fears of men form capital for the magician's trade.

MAGICIAN. My liege, I fear your feelings are perturbed; and I pause upon the threshold of communication, in dread of what is revealed.

PHARAOH (*enraged*). Speak! Let me know the worst; for, if you longer hesitate, the lifting up of my hand shall place you beyond the power to tell your tale.

MAGICIAN. Since I am threatened, — but the magician's skill is equal to royal authority, and holds the masses in subservience with a dread that kingship never could command, — since I am threatened, I will not — yes, upon further consideration I will tell you.

PHARAOH (*impatient and fierce*). Speak! I charge you, at this instant; or we may soon decide whose power is greater, yours or mine. Is a king but a tool in the hand of priestly power? I know your craft, and the sanctity of mystery in which you enshrine yourselves; but understand this, that Egypt's king, resting upon the allegiance of the people, hurls at you defiance.

MAGICIAN. A king holds the people in submission of fear, because he can punish them in this world; the priest, because he can punish them in the next. Where, then, rests the stronger force? Men fear, dreading the immediate, but more, because of the awfulness of the *unknown*. Yet, not to debate of our separate strength (for with the king goes the priest, and with the priest the king), I will tell you that the configuration of the stars points to a birth in Egypt's land which threatens your royal house.

PHARAOH. A usurper! A traitor born upon our soil!

MAGICIAN. 'Tis even so; and worst of all from the people now our slaves.

PHARAOH. It is impossible. Is not this statement some magician's craft, to draw from us further concession of wealth or power? They who rule know where the springs of authority are placed, and how to touch them. They are in the secret; and it is folly in them to play off one against another. If, then, this intelligence be sinister, let me know it.

MAGICIAN. It would be folly to attempt such movements with yourself; and this we know, and, knowing, do not waste our strength in useless words. The prediction I reveal is the decree of fate; and you must shape your course accordingly.

PHARAOH (*furious*). The tidings you bring me fill me with rage. What! from the ranks of slavery, shall one arise to dispute the throne with Pharaoh? It cannot be. I swear by Thoth, this cannot be. No, no! the stars may speak falsely; but this can never be.

MAGICIAN. Remember the shepherd kings.

PHARAOH. You will madden me beyond restraint. Leave me; and I will tax my ingenuity to defeat this decree.

MAGICIAN. Should you require our aid, you will find us ready; for both king and priest hold their own only in the weakness and credulity of the people. (*Exit MAGICIAN.*)

PHARAOH (*pacing the stage with furious step*;

then stopping in the centre). This intelligence startles me, although I dare not give utterance to my fears, and must cover my alarm with the whirlwind of my anger. *Those shepherd kings!* Ah! history tells us how they once bore sway in Egypt; and shall that starveling crew of Hebrews, driven hither by means of famine, become the power which shall again subvert our nation? Rather than this shall be, I will wash out the people with their own blood. The power is mine; and I have the disposition to employ it. I am no coward, to be frightened at human groans, and to start aside in dismay at a current of human gore. A tyrant I was born, and a tyrant I will prove myself. (*Exit PHARAOH.*)

SCENE II. *Rustic scene. An emeute of slaves shouting without. Enter crowd, armed with sticks, and shouting; form a gathering on stage.*

JUDAH, 1ST DEMAGOGUE. I heard it with my own ears; and shall we submit to it?

CROWD (*shouting*). Never! Never!

JUDAH. Is it not enough that we are crushed and broken by cruel labor? See these hands, made horn from flesh by the severity of toil. See these feet, torn and bleeding from roaming over the country in search of straw with which to make the brick of bondage. See this back, cut into wales and wounds by the lash of the task-master,

because the tale of my brick was short. Hebrews! will you endure this cruel slavery? will you submit as craven, spiritless creatures to this oppression? would you not rather die as men, than be trodden to death as though you were a viper or a frog? Hebrews, arise! This latter mandate, written in characters of blood, dictated by the spirit of evil, and issued on the wings of tyranny, wars against the very right of nature, and demands that we resist it. "Kill all their male children," is the proclamation. What does this mean, but that we are to be stamped out of existence by a slow yet certain means of destruction? Hebrews! Children of Abraham! will ye not arise and fight, though death should be inevitable? Better to die in arms than in fetters.

CROWD. We will! we will!

REUBEN, 2D DEMAGOGUE. It is true our sorrows are great, and our condition heart-rending; but will revolt improve our circumstances? Can you rely on Judah? is there more in him than talk? and will he be the first to fight, or run? Is not this proclamation now put forth because of our revolt? Pharaoh sees there to be danger lurking among us; and, having the power, he means to tread it out. Can you, I ask again, rely on Judah? If not, wait till the right leader comes. (*Crowd divided in feeling.*)

CROWD (*part shouting*). Hurrah for Judah!

(*The others*). Hurrah for Reuben! (*Enter BOYS, running, and breathless from haste.*)

BOYS. The soldiers are coming! The soldiers are coming! Hasten!

CROWD. What? What?

BOYS. The soldiers are coming! Hasten and get home!

JUDAH. Never fear, Hebrews: be men, and fight.

1ST SLAVE. I have a wife and family at home: I must think of them.

2D SLAVE. I have a whole skin, and I wish to keep it.

3D. SLAVE. I wish to live as long as I can.

JUDAH. Hebrews! cowards! slaves! will you not resist? Where is your courage? whither has it flown? If you will not fight, I'll leave you. (*Exit JUDAH.*)

1ST SLAVE. That's the way with those demagogues: they die in words; but they run away in deed.

(*Enter SOLDIERS.*)

OFFICER (*Reads Proclamation. Proclamation written on large paper, and sealed at bottom.*) By command of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and successor to the mighty Thoth. Be it understood by all persons, that this proclamation is to be carried out both in letter and in spirit, and in its fullest details, without fear or favor, and under the ex-

treme penalty of immediate death by the public executioner for any neglect. That, in consequence of a disposition shown on the part of that people now held in subjection to the Egyptian throne — a people alien and accursed by their calling, who immigrated into the land of Egypt in the time of the great famine — to rebel against the authority of Pharaoh and his officers, and to incite one another to open hostility to the commands laid upon them, be it understood, that every male child born to this people from this time forth shall immediately at the moment of its birth be put to death, and none shall remain alive. Be it also understood that no threats nor tears nor entreaties of relatives, be they parents or otherwise, shall be allowed to prevail to the hinderance of carrying out to the fullest extent this proclamation; and that all persons must so subdue the call of natural sympathy, and the ties of humanity, as neither to hide, shelter, conceal, nor in any way attempt to spare, the male children of the Hebrews. Be it likewise known to all Egyptians, that these Hebrews are to be considered by you as being enemies from ancient times, and that now being in your hand, no oppression is to be thought by you to be too severe, nor hardship too heavy, to inflict upon them. In proof therefore of your patriotism, and your allegiance to the throne of Pharaoh, you are commanded to yield obedience to this decree.

Given at our palace in Raamses, on the banks of the life-giving waters of that noblest of all rivers, the Nilus.

OFFICER (*turning to the crowd*). Hear that, ye miserable, craven slaves; and, in hearing it, read your doom.

1ST SLAVE. There is a possibility of straining the bow until it flies back, and strikes him who bends it.

1ST SOLDIER. Dare you utter such words of threatening? Begone to your labor or your homes. Begone!

OFFICER. Charge!

(*Exeunt crowd and soldiers tumultuously.*)

SCENE III. *Cottage scene. Curtain rising shows the FATHER of MOSES standing with folded arms, as one in despair.*

FATHER. Cruel, cruel mandate!--to kill all the male children of the Hebrews as soon as born. Thus as so many puppies or kittens our offspring are to be destroyed. Is it possible, for a man having the spirit of a man, to be content to hear this and live? Yet how can we act? These demagogues of our people, creatures of tongue without brains, whose courage in word is great, but in deeds so small that it might rest upon a needle's point, have excited the wrath of our masters; and now they adopt this mode of punishment. Mis-

erable delusion! — to suppose it possible to arouse to deeds of valor, such, whose spirit is crushed by the power of slavery. The very consciousness that man is a slave gnaws and gnaws and gnaws at the fibres of his manhood, until his dignity droops and fades and withers and dies; and the man loses that self-respect which even brutes possess, and sinks into a condition that earth can show no equal. 'Tis madness to seek to arouse such to resistance, and does but bind more securely the fetters we would cast aside.

(*Enter MOTHER of MOSES.*)

MOTHER. Oh this trial!

FATHER. Trial call you it? say, rather, curse.

MOTHER. No, no: 'tis but a trial. The God of the Hebrews has but draped our condition in the sackcloth of grief, that he may try us. He still lives and rules.

FATHER. The fond fancy of a woman's brain, which intercourse with sterner life would quickly scatter.

MOTHER. Oh, speak not thus! such wild expressions issuing from your lips but augment my sorrow. Never has your faith failed you as now.

FATHER. Never before has the knife of circumstances carved so deeply into my spirit. The edge of it, keener than a razor, has opened my heart, and let out all hope. Tell *me* there is a

God who lives and rules ! Were you other than you are, my only answer should be a mocking laugh. But, being the companion of my life, your weakness claims my pity ; and I summon your senses to the bar of fact to render faithful verdict. See me, — a man with arms and head and heart, but, without fault of mine, a slave. Speak not ! (*Baring his shoulder.*) See here, this bleeding gash, which opens as though calling for vengeance. 'Twas at noontide this day it was cut by the tyrant's lash ; and for what ? but because I would rest me a minute from the dreadful heat. Speak not ! See yonder the subject on which we dare not speak but in a whisper, — our youngest born, hidden from human gaze as though it were a sin to live. So secret must he be concealed, that stealthily as a thief creeps to his midnight plunder, must his mother visit him. Never before was it a sin in wife to be a mother. These are witnesses in stern facts ; and on their testimony let your senses now decide if there be a God who lives and rules.

MOTHER. It is not by the evidence of sense such questions can be decided. God is not to be judged of by his doings, but by his word. My heart bleeds at sight of your sufferings. Your galling wounds crush my spirit ; while the thought of the babe drives my soul to where the heat of intense agony dries up the power to weep. Yet from these depths my faith takes hold on God, and draws in strength to live.

FATHER. To live! To die were better. I am weary of life, and would lay me down to rest. My heart is crushed: my brain whirls. To die, to die, to die! Aha, aha! This is the remedy for every sorrow.

MOTHER (*clasping her hands in agony, and looking upward*). O Father! spare my husband's brain!

FATHER (*creeping toward her with maniacal look, and producing a knife*). See this! One stroke on the babe, on you, on me; and *then we sink to rest*.

MOTHER (*seizing his arm*). Stay! Where has your manhood flown? Would you do to yourself, the babe, and me, what you dare the vengeance of the tyrant to resist? There *is* a God who rules. I know it; and you know it too. But you have permitted your feeling to betray your judgment until it has led you into unbelief; and want of faith in God leaves you thus helplessly tossed upon this sea of sorrow. Calm your feeling: come back to the harbor of religious confidence; nor deem it unmanly that I, a woman, should conduct you thither.

FATHER (*pacing the stage slowly*). The man curses himself who yields his reason to his feeling, or his faith to the emotion caused by passing events. I crave your pardon; for sorrow and vexation destroyed for a moment the balance of my

brain. Happy the man who has a wife, a believer in Israel's God! (*Knocking without.*) Who stands at the door? Let me see.

MOTHER. Not you, but me. Perhaps it is some fresh vexation from our foes.

(*Enter EGYPTIAN SPY.*)

FATHER. She is a spy: beware!

SPY. I am an outcast from my people, who in their luxury and wealth care not to know the wretched. Time was when I had youth and health and friends; but now I creep from place to place, that I may live upon the bounty of the stranger.

FATHER. Were poverty your only fault you would be welcome here.

MOTHER. Hush!

SPY. I am suspected because I am poor. This is the result of poverty. Who ever thinks a rich man can do wrong? It is the poor who sin, who are cursed here and hereafter. Yet I thought that poverty in you would not suspect its sister in myself; and so I sought for aid.

FATHER. To such food and shelter as we possess you would be welcome, did we believe your tale.

SPY. Do you doubt me?

FATHER. The times refuse to admit all confidence.

SPY. The times ! When have not the times had to bear all blame for every fault ? The times are hard, I know, upon your race ; and this last decree does not increase your comfort.

FATHER. Comfort is a term our people know not beneath the present tyranny. I would —

MOTHER. Good woman, my husband is not well ; and this makes his speech ungracious. Wait : I will furnish you with refreshment.

SPY. I ask no favor of a churl ; but it might be better had you been more civil. Hark ! I hear the sobbing of a babe.

MOTHER. Your ears deceive you. Stay ! I will obtain food for you.

SPY. No, no : I receive no grudging alms. I will send you a nurse for that babe. (*Exit SPY.*)

FATHER. Stop ! (*Tries to seize her.*)

MOTHER. Our secret is now found out.

FATHER. 'Tis true ; and we must prepare to hide the child.

. (*Curtain falls.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Garden scene. Enter PRINCESS and ASENATH.*

ASENATH. My princess, bear with me, while I once more plead that you should exert your influ-

ence with the king, and seek to turn aside this cruel edict.

PRINCESS. Asenath, my heart, as yours, bleeds for the decree. It is cruel! I know it to be cruel, and foolish too. Oppression always destroys such as employ it. The evil may not come immediately; but not more certain is the march of the sun across the sky, than will oppression crush such as practise it. Yet how can I act? The magicians have the ear of Pharaoh, and have so inflamed his mind that he is maddened.

ASENATH. But think of injured innocence, a sister's tears; a mother's heart crushed, riven, by the shock, and bleeding from every fissure in streams,—that as the mute voice of nature call upon the gods for interference.

PRINCESS. Oh, spare my feelings, Asenath! Your persistent urging seems to reproach me with neglect. By my fondness I can control my father to a certain point; and beyond it I dare not venture.

ASENATH. Yet, my princess, 'tis worth the risk. It is the voice of humanity calling you to dare his kingly wrath to support its claims. Were it the mothers of Egypt who were thus suffering,—yours or mine,—would not our hearts bleed, and our bosoms swell with the bitter sigh of the deepest agony? These poor slaves have hearts as ours, though clothed, by the hand of unfriendly

circumstances, in ruder form. It was but this morning I heard of one, who, frantic from having her babe destroyed, plunged into the Nile, and sunk beneath its surface as food for crocodiles.

PRINCESS. I shudder at such a tale. My blood curdles in horror in the presence of such a scene ; and I seem a reproach to myself, that I cannot bring the influence of my birth to turn aside this fate.

ASENATH. Do try, my princess.

PRINCESS. I will. Now leave me.

ASENATH. I will retire, and plead with offerings of fruits and flowers before the gods of Egypt for your success. (*Exit* ASENATH.)

PRINCESS (*pacing the stage twice in thoughtful silence; stops near the right wing*). I have pledged my word to Asenath ; and I will do it, let the sacrifice be what it may. (*Exit* PRINCESS.)

SCENE II. *Night scene. Cut wood. Lights turned down. Enter* FATHER *and* SISTER of MOSES ; FATHER *carrying the ark of bulrushes.*

FATHER. Miriam, this seems a likely place, where we may hide in safety our little treasure. (*Secretes the ark in the flags.*)

MIRIAM (*in stage whisper*). 'Tis lonely.

FATHER. Do you fear, my child ?

MIRIAM. Hark ! what noise was that ?

FATHER. 'Twas but the croaking of a frog,

which finds a home on Nilus brink. I know it is hard for one so young to endure so much ; but the times are hard for all. Gladly would I shield you from every grief ; but a father's love is powerless in presence of such oppression. Yet even here our God can safely keep you.

MIRIAM. Father, forgive my childish fear : it was but a transient emotion, the result of a momentary weakness. It is over now ; and I feel as strong as heart so tender can fondly hope to be.

FATHER. Your mother and I will not cease in our prayers for your protection.

MIRIAM. I know it ; and when the power of fear creeps through my veins in shivering chill, and fancy, aroused in midnight hour, conjures within my brain a thousand hideous forms of direful shape, my mind's eye shall see your petition floating upward to the throne of God, breathing in spirit voice the words, " O Father, spare my children ! "

FATHER. This will give you strength.

MIRIAM. It will ; for our sad lot has taught me to feel that nearness to God affords the truest courage.

FATHER. Let us, then, kneel, while I commend you to God. (*They kneel in silence.* FATHER resting on one knee, and taking the right hand of MIRIAM in his left, holds his own right hand toward heaven.) I can now leave you in our Father's hand. (*Rising.*) Good-night. (*Stage embrace.*)

MIRIAM. Good-night ! I am courageous now. (*Follows him to the wing, waving her hand.*) Poor soul ! Young as I am in years, I am old in suffering, and well can sympathize with that distress which bends your noble form to earth, as though the weight of age were resting on it. Peace, heart ! nor palpitate in dread of horrors that may never come. Think on thy God : think on some scene of ancient times, when virtue tried staggered through the roughness of the road it had to tread, yet in its weakest moments felt itself by an unseen power sustained. God never leaves those who in him trust. Hark ! what noise was that ? Keep quiet, spirit ! sink into repose, nor beat and flutter at the slightest sound, as though a culprit fleeing from the face of justice. 'Tis *law* which hunts us, — cruel, cruel *law* ; and justice takes our side, though silent now. I'll look upon the babe : the sight of him will calm my mind. (*Draws near to the ark, bends over it for a moment in silence, then comes to the front of stage.*) He sleeps, and in his slumber smiles. Perhaps it is some angel voice singing in spirit song to his soul, which wreathes his infant features with the garland of delight. Yet 'tis well to see some one happy, although an unconscious babe. I'll sit me down, and wait the passing of these weary hours. I hear footsteps. (*Hides among the flags.*)

(*Enter MOTHER.*)

MOTHER. This is the spot he told me of: yet I can see no traces, nor hear the sound even of a whisper. I'll call. Miriam! (*Stage whisper.*) No answer. Can it be that my worst fears are realized, and that they are discovered? Oh, were this true, 'twould break my heart! I'll call again. Miriam!

MIRIAM. Is it you, my darling mother? I am here. (*Comes from her hid'ng-place.*)

MOTHER. How thankful! I could not let you longer stay without visiting you. How have the hours sped? How is the babe?

MIRIAM. We are both safe. He sleeps.

MOTHER. 'Tis well. Oh that sleep were mine! But my soul is tossed in maternal anxiety; and my brain burns with the fires of apprehension.

MIRIAM. Have faith in God. Is it not too venturesome to come hither, and to run the risk of being seen, even that you might ascertain if we were well?

MOTHER. I dread lest a mother's fears should have betrayed my prudence; for in coming hither I thought I beheld a human form crouching by the wayside. But fear added wings to my feet; and I fled without being assured of what I saw.

MIRIAM. I trust it was but imagination, the effect of a brain weary from excitement. Back! This way! It is a human voice. (*They hide themselves.*)

(*Enter EGYPTIAN SPY.*)

SPY. I am certain I saw a woman pass me. She came this way. It is a miserable thing to live when one ought in nature to die. Of what worth is life when youth and hearing and seeing, and the use of limbs, are gone? Had I been as agile as in days that are past, I could have overtaken her. I believe those Hebrews have a secret; and I will worm it out should it cost my life. I will follow on. (*Crosses the stage.*)

(*MOTHER and MIRIAM come forth.*)

MIRIAM. How near we were being discovered!

MOTHER. Thank Heaven we are safe!

MIRIAM. Now retire; and I will secrete me again, and wait till break of day. (*Exit MOTHER. MIRIAM hides.*)

SCENE III. *Morning. Outside garden. Lights turned up. Enter SPY.*

SPY. Is my brain becoming crazed? Yet mine is not a nature for imagination to play upon. My life has been made up of too much fact to leave great room for the sport of fancy. I have been searching all this long, long night, to find out—what? Nothing. Yet I am certain those Hebrews have a secret. Who is this walking abroad at early dawn? I'll hide me. (*Exit SPY.*)

(*Enter* LUCRETIA.)

LUCRETIA. Is it not maddening, that, with all I can do, Asenath crosses me at every point! What is she more than I, that the princess thus seeks her society? Has she prettier hair, or fairer hands, or more beautiful eyes? or is her tongue fixed to throw off sweeter sounds? I'm jealous; yes, I'm jealous; for, do all I can, I fail to strike her from the favor of her princess. It is that feeling of humanity she pretends to have, which forms her escort into royal favor, and keeps her there. The princess pities those Hebrew slaves; and she affects to do so too. But I am no hypocrite, and believe such as have the power should hold it, and use it too. I cannot fawn and sigh, and say, "My darling princess, were it our mothers thus suffering." I'm jealous; yes, I'm jealous. Oh that I could find out something to disgrace her! I know she visits those Hebrew slaves; and, could I find her in the act of doing so, I would accuse her to the magicians.

(*Re-enter* SPY.)

SPY. Fair lady!

LUCRETIA. Ah! (*Starts.*)

SPY. Start not. I am a woman, though old and poor. Bid me tell your fortune.

LUCRETIA. I know it too well.

SPY. You are angry; but, from a dream I had

of you, I think I can tell you the road to the favor of your princess.'

LUCRETIA. Could you do this, I would make it worth the trouble.

SPY. 'Tis easy done. Meet me at midnight by the garden wall. (*Aside.*) I'll use her to find out the secret of those Hebrews. (*Exit SPY.*)

(*Enter LADIES.*)

1ST LADY. Ah! Lucretia here?

2D LADY. She walks abroad for health or love.

3D LADY. For both; for, being love-sick, she wishes to cure it by getting married, or to kill it in disappointment.

1ST LADY. Say rather that she seeks solitude, being maddened with jealousy against Asenath.

(*Enter ATTENDANT SLAVE.*)

ATTENDANT. Ladies, your princess bids you come to her. (*Exeunt all.*)

(*Scene changes to cut wood. Enter MIRIAM.*)

MIRIAM. 'Tis morning. Another night has passed; and the babe is safe. How slowly the hours have rolled away! and my young heart has palpitated with alarm at every sound. But the night has gone; and now the dangers of the day approach; yet He who has been my friend will so remain. I hear the sound of human voices. (*Retires to the wing.*)

(*Enter PRINCESS and train.*)

PRINCESS. Ladies, would you keep perpetual youth, I would advise that you rise early.

LUCRETIA (*aside*). Hear what the fawning Asenath will say.

ASENATH. My princess, we would ever be young; and, if such simple means will secure the good, 'tis worth the trying.

LUCRETIA (*aside*). I would that the plague would seize you, and that you would die.

MAHLON. My princess, 'twas near this spot I came to bathe, and found the waters clearer, and fragrant from some odoriferous plant which grows near by. So sweet is the perfume, that I retained the odor in my senses all the day.

PRINCESS. Go find the exact spot, that I may bathe me there. (*Goes. Miriam hides, and peeps forth.*)

MAHLON. Oh! what is this? It is a babe. (*All bend forward. Mahlon brings forth the ark of bulrushes.*) See! it weeps. Precious innocent! How can a woman's eyes look upon such an object, and her heart remain unmoved?

PRINCESS. It is one of the Hebrews' children. Oh that cruel law which bids a mother cast its offspring forth a prey to the beasts of earth! This child is an outcast, a friendless fugitive, floating upon the river's brink,—an infant waif of humanity drifting toward the jaws of destruction. What can be done with it?

MAHLON. Make it your own, my princess. Take it in the name of humanity. Consider it a present from the gods, a pledge of favor and of fortune.

PRINCESS. It shall be mine. I'll take it beneath my care.

MAHLON. Where shall we keep it?

PRINCESS (*seeing Miriam peeping*). See yonder peasant girl: call her. (*Exit 3D LADY.*)

(*Re-enter 3D LADY and MIRIAM.*)

PRINCESS. Know you a woman who could nurse this babe? We found it floating on the stream; and I have a mind to keep it for myself.

MIRIAM. I know a woman who would nurse it well.

PRINCESS. Lives she far from here?

MIRIAM. Not so far but I will quickly have her present.

PRINCESS. Hasten! (*Exit MIRIAM.*)

MAHLON. It is better to save a life than to take one.

PRINCESS. I feel it is all that I can do to correct a wrong which jealousy in Pharaoh has brought forth.

(*Re-enter MIRIAM with her mother.*)

PRINCESS. See this treasure I have found floating on Nilus' brink: can you your service

render for its welfare? (MOTHER *bends over the ark, then falls before the princess.*)

MOTHER. Pardon me, and bid me tell you truth. This child is mine by nature; but, under the power of fear, I cast it forth, perhaps to perish, yet in the fondest hope that something might occur to save its life. I left it with my God, who heard a mother's cry, and sent you hither. MERCY gives this child to *you*, but bid *me* be its nurse. I will watch over it: I will tend it with all a mother's care, and lay it at your feet a pledge that Heaven hears the cry of the oppressed.

PRINCESS. Take this child, and nurse him for me; and I will give thee thy wages.

MOTHER. We have our wages in your goodness.

PRINCESS. Call his name MOSES, because I drew him out of the water; and tell the Hebrews that Pharaoh's daughter has a heart which feels their woes.

MOTHER. Here come my people. (*Enter all.*) Hebrews, this is your friend.

(TABLEAU. MOTHER and MIRIAM *kneel over the ark.* EGYPTIANS and HEBREWS *form a crescent.*)

Time to perform the drama, forty-five minutes.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BENJAMIN	}	<i>Conspirators, Brothers of Jephthah.</i>
ISAAC		
AMMINADIB		
SALMON		
JESSE	}	
REUBEN		<i>Friend of Jephthah.</i>
HERMIT		<i>Mountaineer.</i>
ARABS		<i>Mountaineers.</i>
HARPIST, BOYS, SOLDIERS.		
JEPHTHAH		<i>Leader of the Gileadites.</i>
SALOME	}	<i>Companions of Rachel.</i>
ESTHER		
RACHEL		<i>Jephthah's Daughter.</i>

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Time, evening. ISAAC and BENJAMIN.*
Outside tent.

ISAAC. You inquire of me the reason why Nature concentrates the excellencies of a family in one person; and I cannot give it. I simply know she has her freakish moods, and in such workings bids defiance to the clearest brain to foretell the course she'll take.

BENJAMIN. It is doubtless true that in making up a man, Nature sometimes attaches superfluities to his person, and gives to him six fingers on one hand, or multiplies the number of his toes, or furnishes him with pendant ears, or crooks his back as though she had meant to form a double-headed being, and, stopping at his shoulders, which she made the base of her intentions, flies off in caprice. But, because the exterior of the house may wear an aspect differing from its fellows, does it follow that in uniqueness the furniture corresponds?

ISAAC. To this I also say, I see no reason why such should not be the case.

BENJAMIN. But can you see a reason why it should? and, failing this, is it not possible for our prepossessions to be but the sport of fancy, and that we delude ourselves?

ISAAC. The progeny of fancy all must admit to be a numerous race, and so short-lived as frequently to die as soon as born; while in the presence of stern fact they melt as wax before a blazing fire. But why your argument?

BENJAMIN. My argument is simple. I am older than yourself, and watched with interest the budding of your infancy, the blooming of your youth; and, when time placed the chaplet of manhood on your brow, my heart, elated at the sight, leaped up in pride to call you — *brother*.

ISAAC. Your fraternal kindness I appreciate; and never may deed of mine lead you to blush o'er such relationship!

BENJAMIN. There is but one dread I have.

ISAAC. Name it; and, can I see it a reality, I'll bend the energies of my being to place your mind at ease.

BENJAMIN. It is the influence of Jephthah over you.

ISAAC. I know not your meaning. He is our brother; and, being such, as with yourself, I am prepared to admire what in him is excellent.

BENJAMIN. Is he our brother?

ISAAC. He is by father.

BENJAMIN. A slender thread, methinks, to bind him to us. He calls our *father* his; but the *maternal* link, Nature's plainest stamp of brotherhood, and commanding our strongest reverence, he is wanting in. Moreover, is not his mother ever plotting to advance his interest at our expense?

ISAAC. He is worthy of the position he holds among us. Is he not brave, courageous, strong, and ever ready to share all danger as reward?

BENJAMIN. In this expression lies my grief. My brother, bear with me while the feeling the mother-union of our being stirs within me moves my tongue to speak. Isaac, you are my pride. As I have watched your past, so have I painted your future, and within the chamber of my mind have hung the picture, where, lighted by the lamp of hope, I may trace its lines in the details of your life, and draw my happiness from the resemblance. But your blind admiration of the supposed excellencies of Jephthah dim the lustre, and hide my fondest expectations in the gloom of apprehension. Yet where lies the fascination? He is brave: so are you. He is courageous: so are you. He is strong: so are you. He is ever willing to share all danger as reward; but you are willing to take the greatest share of danger, and in the dignity of

true nobleness leave the reward to others, finding your own alone in the deeds performed. How, then, can I stand idly by, and see the real obscured by the ideal? This would be as unseemly as to burn my house myself, that I might save my neighbors; or as unreasonable as to claim for the moon a greater brightness than the sun can yield; or as wicked as to destroy my own child to spare that of another. Instinct, reason, nature,—all call on me to awaken you to feel your position, to break the spell Jephthah has cast upon you, and to advance your personal right to lead us, in honor of your merit.

ISAAC. I a leader in our family?

BENJAMIN. Yes, you. True leadership bears the stamp of nature: it is seen by all; and instinctively a reverence is yielded, as recognizing the vice-regal authority of destiny.

ISAAC. You flatter me.

BENJAMIN. Did I presume thus to act, I should be worthy only of your scorn. Despise the flatterer, is the verdict of the noble. It is just; nor have I forgotten what is due to myself, to sink thus low.

ISAAC. Forgive me; but the shadow of the thought of leadership has not so much as flitted across my brain.

BENJAMIN. You deceive yourself in this. What is your admiration of Jephthah but the longing for

leadership in embryo? It is the egg where the desire is being hatched. The life is as yet scarcely visible; but under the growth of time, and the warmth of incidents, it will wriggle forth, and become the child you cannot despise.

ISAAC (*pacing the stage, crossing BENJAMIN*). The thought is new; nor can I yield the point, but that our nearer relationship has played upon your fancy, until you see me what I am not.

BENJAMIN. Let your own heart be called in evidence of my assertion, and believe yourself. Have there not, amidst the silence of the night, when the mind unharnessed seeks repose from the war of life, trooped across your brain in sleep visions of leadership? Have you not thought Jephthah dead or banished, and by the demand of the family yourself raised to lead and to defend us? How strange the elevation seemed to you! yet how naturally you assumed it! and in this new position a force hitherto latent came to the surface; and on its tide you floated up to honor, to conquest, and to receive the thanks of all! What are these dreams but the shadow of the future thrown upon the wall of brain, that should be revered, and made the incentive to lead you on to action?

ISAAC. I am startled at your assertion; and, but my reverence for you controls my mind, would think you fraternized with agency beyond the

range of mortals, who, deep in the spirit-lore of men, had counselled you on the inner working of my soul, which I thought secret with myself.

BENJAMIN. You would think that Heaven or Hell had drawn the picture of your inmost thoughts, and shown it to me?

ISAAC. So well is it portrayed, they might have done so; and what I thought but fancy, and swept away by the narrating of the fact, now wears importance.

BENJAMIN. This is well. Yet not from supernatural source do I receive this fact, but from looking through the windows of your deeds and motions, and seeing the working of your soul within. Believe, then, your destiny, as written by the finger of nature on your very brow, to be the leadership of our family. To be assured of this would fill our hearts with light, in sweeping forth the cloud which Jephthah casts upon us.

ISAAC. Leave me, that I may digest our talk, and see if there be in it food or poison.

BENJAMIN (*leaving the stage*). Adieu, then. It is well to see him moved. This bodes good fortune; for, were he with Jephthah, they could defy my efforts. (*Exit BENJAMIN.*)

ISAAC (*pacing the stage slowly*). We know the passing hour: the next is hidden from our gaze, and may reach us, waking our slumbering hopes to realize their longings, or to crush them dead with

the bolts of disappointment. That we should not know ourselves is not so strange ; for resting on some prominence within, or cast beyond us, the mind's eye fails to grasp what in reality we are ; and, did it do so, partiality or diffidence would so shake the picture that we could not see the detail true. It is left for men to see their fellows, that from each other we may learn to seek perfection. That Benjamin has portrayed my feelings, I cannot deny ; but has he also told my fortune ? Of this I'm doubtful, and scarcely can persuade myself he does not flatter me. Yet, as he was speaking, the feeling he aroused seemed but the echo of the words he said. It was as though truth called to truth, and from within the cavern of my heart the response came forth. This fact disquiets me ; and I feel excited. I admire Jephthah. Hitherto I have revered him, and have followed in his lead without a thought beyond. But, should others speak the truth, Jephthah must soon yield to me ; and that phase in human nature must appear, — serve others until you can serve yourself. (*Exit ISAAC.*)

SCENE II. *Wood scene. Conspirators plotting.*

Enter BENJAMIN, AMMINADIB, SALMON, JESSE.

AMMINADIB. Have you to-day seen Jephthah ?

SALMON. I saw the upstart at early dawn.

JESSE. He rises with the light.

AMMINADIB. Peace, boy! Say, rather, that, haunted by the visions of his pride, his unquiet spirit cannot rest; and the trooping of such figures of his fancy across his brain keeps his eyeballs staring.

SALMON. His sleep is light whom ambition poisons. Under such influence the bursting fancy throws off prodigies of character so startling as to keep one waking, wondering at his own creation.

BENJAMIN. Yet, while the fertile brain brings forth a thousand fantasies, they all are harmless, unless sustained by courage invincible. He is but an assassin in thought who plans a way to destroy his foe, and, failing in heart to reduce his scheme to practice, his clearest device sinks innocently away.

AMMINADIB. But Jephthah has courage; nor would he be slow to employ it against ourselves to advance his own desires.

SALMON. Then he must be rendered helpless.

BENJAMIN. Such talk is light: it is the gushing forth of feeling on the wings of words, to die as soon as born. Are we prepared for more than a verbal shortening of that power, which, growing stronger from the respite gained, may live to hurl at us defiance?

AMMINADIB. What would you advise?

BENJAMIN. In this I am slow to act; as to ad-

wise is to summon deeds, which, being gathered, may rise in tumultuous force, and produce results to make the bravest shudder.

SALMON. Still some one must move in this, or let it fall, and tamely submit to be ruled and driven by one who wears but half a name.

AMMINADIB. Rather than this should be, I'd advise a course, and practise it alone, until all danger from such cause should disturb no more.

BENJAMIN. I do not fear to offer counsel in this perplexity, grave as is the occasion ; but it is well to know the subsoil of the land one has to till, lest, being by appearances deceived, he should cast in seed there is not depth of earth to fructify. Could I but read your hearts, and know if your looks and words are a clear reflection of your inclination and resolve, I would speak more freely.

AMMINADIB. For myself I swear, that neither will I, nor shall my family, ever yield submission to that usurper. If we are wanting in courage to despatch him, there are still two ways open for my own escape. There is a wide world to range over beyond the limit of our patrimony ; and, failing this, a slender space will cover alike my resentment and my weakness.

SALMON. What ! render our women widows, and our children fatherless, that by our exit from life we may pay homage to his ambition ? It would

be to mock my manhood thus to act. He may perish ; but I must live, and enjoy life too.

BENJAMIN. Then listen ! In a world where all cannot be good, the greatest good for the greatest number should form the goal of all pursuits. This practice should run the circle of humanity : and as within this outer ring there are circles smaller, as those of tribes and families, until it reaches the narrow circle,—self ; so the same law should govern all. I would not injure Jephthah as a man ; but if as an usurper he cannot be reached only through his manhood, then that must perish, that the usurper may be destroyed. This is within the law of the greatest good for the greatest number ; for one falls that the rest may all be free.

JESSE. Is there no way but death ?

AMMINADIB. Hush, boy ! You are too young to offer counsel ; and the grim thought of death pales your cheek. But yield your judgment to our maturer wisdom, nor fear to follow where your brothers lead.

JESSE. But to talk so lightly of taking life !

SALMON. Life loses its sacredness when he who wears it does so only for himself, and sustains it by oppressing others.

JESSE. This cannot be so true as to justify the act of killing.

BENJAMIN. Our youngest brother well may

tremble at the thought of blood ; and we must revere that youthful tenderness which from his heart is not removed by sterner intercourse with life. But to put an oppressor from us does not of necessity involve taking life.

JESSE. Oh ! spare his life, and my lips shall then be sealed in full consent of your doings, although we cast him forth a fugitive.

AMMINADIB. Here comes Isaac. Let us all do him homage.

(*Enter ISAAC. All bowing.*)

ISAAC. All hail, my brothers.

SALMON. (*All rising.*) It is spoken as a prince.

AMMINADIB. It is simple nature, breathing forth an authority born of Fate.

ISAAC. You flatter me.

AMMINADIB. It is thus the modesty of true genius ever speaks.

ISAAC. I claim no pretence to modesty ; but I have felt this day that even admiration may win for itself abuse.

BENJAMIN (*aside*). He has been touched upon the place made tender by my rubbing.

SALMON. Pardon my curiosity ; but may I inquire the meaning of your words ?

ISAAC. The meaning is simple. One may pay homage of admiration until it becomes as a duty he must discharge, or be reprov'd.

SALMON. Your words are still an enigma.

AMMINADIB. They can only be so to your dull brain; to me they are clear enough. He means that the idol of his life is found to be something beneath a god.

ISAAC. Something beneath a man.

BENJAMIN. What! Jephthah?

ISAAC. 'Tis even so. This morning, when I met him, and approached to speak as is my custom, he turned him on his heel, and passed in silence.

BENJAMIN. Doubtless thinking you would follow him, and in the adoration of a courtier bow the knee, and crave his god-like ears to bend and listen to your humble speech.

ISAAC. I a suppliant at his feet?

SALMON. Not if you are the man I give you credit for being.

AMMINADIB. He is that man, and more. We have failed to credit our brother with what he is; but to the observing mind, the deeper virtues of his nature have been long apparent.

ISAAC. I lay no special claim to virtue; but, rather than submit to conditions of friendship which are swayed by caprice, I'll live alone.

SALMON. It is nobly said; for friendship must be mutual, or must quickly cease.

BENJAMIN (*aside*). And friendship perverted become enmity rampant.

AMMINADIB. This bitterness we have long tasted, and have in silence borne it; but in you it produces nausea as soon as touched.

ISAAC. Nor will I again taste it; for, should the cup containing it be but proffered me, I will lose my manhood, or destroy the hand which holds it.

BENJAMIN. Better to remove the man who mixes such draughts of insolence for his compeers, or we may become so impregnated with the poison as at length to receive it with the apathy of the weakest thralldom. Jephthah has passed the limit of human endurance; and, if we be men, we must feel that his dealings toward us cause patience to cease from being longer a virtue.

ISAAC. Name a plan for his removal; for the insult he this morning gave me so inflamed my spirit, as to arouse my wrath beyond restraint.

BENJAMIN. This is not the hour to decide how this can best be done. Come to my home a week from hence, to share my evening meal; and by that time our thought will be matured. (*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE III. *Pastoral scene. Time, Morning.*

Enter RACHEL.

RACHEL. Why am I not a part of what surrounds me? Yet I am not; for while, kissed by the morning breeze, all nature awakes to laughter

and to song, I alone, stand independent in my sorrow. The merry birds, the purling stream, the incense of flowers, all tell of an affinity with the joyousness of the hour; but the power of thought within my brain acts as a jailer to the happy feelings of my youthful heart, and locks them up in gloom. Fain would I their prison break, and set them free; but reflection, and even the potency of morning prayer, which bears the soul above the range of earth, to where it drinks in strength, borne on the wings of faith from off the hill of God in paradise, fails to help me. Fondly I watched in humble hope the ascent of my petition, but could not trace it far; for gloom, as an earth cloud, hid it from my view, and left my heart in sadness. Yet the feeling may be but the effect of a morbid fancy, which, uncontrolled by the power of inclination during sleep, conjured from strange mixtures of its necromantic skill a nightly visitor, with shape and voice, and marched it across my brain. So plain did it appear, and so tangible, that I felt its touch; and its voice spoke plainly, "Rachel, danger surrounds your father: hasten hence if you would save him, ere it be too late. A purpose for his destruction is already born within the heart of his foes, and waits but time to give it strength to set itself in motion." Thus spake the vision; and it is this voice which now oppresses me. Yet the peaceful

exterior of all things seems to mock the idea that any thing so vile can dwell beneath. I'll rest me here, and bathe me in the sunlight, whose genial warmth may dry the humid vapors from my brain. (*Seats herself.*)

(*Enter JESSE.*)

JESSE. Abroad thus early! 'Twill make the daughter of Jephthah fair to sport with the breeze which escorts to our sphere the rising sun. (*Rachel rising in surprise.*)

RACHEL. I seek not fairness of countenance by my presence here, but light for my brain, working in fear arising from obscurity.

JESSE. You are yet too young for torturing thought to sting you.

RACHEL. 'Tis not from deeds nor from desires indulged offensive to my purer self, that springs my sadness.

JESSE. Possibly it is some maiden hope, scarce yet defined, whose birth's attended by the goblin Dread which casts its shadow o'er you.

RACHEL. 'Tis such fear as a daughter has who trembles for the future of her father.

JESSE. What! (*Starts in surprise.*)

RACHEL. Why do you start? Have you knowledge that my dread is but the shadow of a brooding evil?

JESSE. What phantom now torments you?

RACHEL. Is it a phantom? Your tell-tale ex-

clamation of surprise makes my dread more poignant. Have you the faintest glimpse that but the thought of evil toward my father dawns on any heart? If so, pray let me know it.

JESSE. In the light of youthful innocence I seem a monster to myself. Yet I would not wrong you. In my own esteem I appear as a frail skiff caught by contending currents, now drawn here, now there, without the power of resisting. Persuaded by fraternal feeling toward my kindred, I learn from them what, confiding in me, I should conceal. But in your presence the resolution born with them dies out; and unresistingly I float toward the other side.

RACHEL. This talk is strange.

JESSE. Strange I admit it to be; and must make me appear despicable, as one whose mind lacks consistency to keep any shape. But, placed as I am, I must either be a traitor to them, or to you and to my better self.

RACHEL. Oh, tell me! Does danger to my father lurk among his kindred? Keep not silence, as you value the blessing of an only child.

JESSE. I had rather gone some other way than met with you: then I had not been tempted. But the fires of a woman's eyes light up the thoughts of the heart, and call forth, as tormenting ghosts, such as are not friendly toward herself.

RACHEL. Is my dream, then, true? Pause not

in the relation of what is. Let me know the worst, that I may warn my father of the danger, and aid in his escape.

JESSE. I have no knowledge of any positive danger; but this we know, that, when we hear the thunders roar, it is not impossible that some forked flash may strike an object that we hold most dear. Jephthah has aroused the jealousy of his kindred; and they mutter threats.

RACHEL. Oh my poor father! What has he done to awake the indignation of his brothers? why is their jealousy aroused?

JESSE. They say he usurps authority which belongs not to him, and treats the rest of the family with contempt.

RACHEL. 'Tis false! I scorn to listen to such charge against one who in danger shows the bravery of despair; in difficulty, the courage of a lion; in council, the wisdom of the sage; in sorrow, the tenderness of woman. A charge so base, so opposed to all that observation and experience must frankly testify, I hurl back upon his accusers, and hold my father pure, and free from calumny so coarse.

JESSE. This is the feeling they entertain; nor did I think to tell you. But my heart sits so near my lip, that the first person I meet can draw it forth.

RACHEL. You should have told me. It was

only the part of righteousness, the part of manliness, the duty of my uncle, thus to tell me.

JESSE. Yes, — no, no, — yes. Both sides have their opinion on this question ; and they fail to harmonize. I wish I had not seen you ; then I could not have told you. But even now I simply say, Should the eagle be invited to feed with the ravens, let him be watchful of the meat he chooses. Adieu ! (*Exit JESSE.*)

RACHEL. Go ! — in every thing vacillating. Now he appears a friend, fawning in his praises, and the next hour takes sides against us with our greatest foes. But I forbear reproach : he is as nature made him, and perhaps should claim my pity. Yet I am glad of his intimation, as it tells of danger in embryo, and bids me warn my father of the approaching evil. He comes.

(*Enter JEPHTHAH.*)

JEPHTHAH. My daughter, the child whose soul can find delight in nature's beauties reveals a purity that must gladden a father's heart. I congratulate you on such choice of friendship.

RACHEL. My friendship with nature truly yields me pleasure ; but this I dare scarcely claim as the cause for my presence here.

JEPHTHAH. I regret that other than pleasure should bring you here. May I ask your confidence ?

RACHEL. I fear the telling of it will be but unwelcome news.

JEPHTHAH. It is not *every* unpleasant sound which strikes the heart with sadness. As a soldier, I have borne the tempest's rage, the thunder's peal, the roaring flood; and while these voices of excited nature have paled the cheek, and sent a trembling through the limbs, of others, my own heart has remained in calm. In battle, too, the crash of spears, the clash of swords, and the bow-string twang, have made my spirit leap in martial delight. Have you sounds more terrible than these to utter?

RACHEL. I have.

JEPHTHAH. Be calm, my child. Remember that the manner of narrating may increase the terror of the story beyond its natural claim. What have you so horrible to relate?

RACHEL. It is a tale of conspiracy against yourself, — of conspiracy hatched in jealousy, and bearing all the cruelty of the dragon which brought it forth.

JEPHTHAH. Conspiracy! by whom?

RACHEL. Your brothers.

JEPHTHAH. Do they think to do me harm? and are they plotting my destruction? I am not surprised; but they shall know that Jephthah is one they must not play with.

RACHEL. My father, let us away from such seat of cruelty.

JEPHTHAH. Calm your fears. Should this thing be as you relate, flight is the last thing we must think of. I have stood the guardian of our family, not that I desired it, but from the wish of all; and my success has brought me danger. But I, who have stood in defence of my family, will now defend myself against them.

RACHEL. Better to leave the ungrateful to themselves.

JEPHTHAH. Only as the last resource.

RACHEL. But the doors may all be closed, and escape impossible.

JEPHTHAH. Leave that with me and with our fathers' God. He ruleth in the earth; and the dark circles of human exigency are the points where he bursts forth in the refulgence of his delivering power, that by his sudden appearance he may win our confidence to repose in him. But how came you by this knowledge?

RACHEL. Ask not for my authority. But this is the note of warning: "Should the eagle be invited to feast with the ravens, let him be careful of the meat he chooses."

JEPHTHAH. I smile at your earnestness. I fear some crafty spirit has been playing on your fears. Now leave me.

RACHEL. Think deep, my father, o'er the fate which threatens you; and may Israel's God be your shield! (*Exit RACHEL.*)

JEPHTHAH. I do not question the truth which she has heard. It agrees with this (*taking from his bosom a letter ; reading*) : " Benjamin invites his brothers to a feast, and begs that Jephthah will honor him with his presence." Yes, I'll go. It never shall be said that I was afraid to meet with them. My heart is guiltless of the fault they charge me with ; and, were it otherwise, I deserve to die. But, being innocent, my absence shall not stamp me guilty, and thus strengthen their power against me. I will go ; and, unless the measures they employ are so sudden or so subtle as to deceive my watchful eyes and ears, they may yet find they have mistaken their purpose. Still I am sorry my child is made acquainted with the fact. But that cannot be helped. I lose no time in gleaning further knowledge. (*Exit JEPHTHAH.*)

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Curtain rising shows tent, with table and benches, with fruits and goblets. BENJAMIN, AMMINADIB, sitting ; ISAAC and SALMON standing. Boy seated near right wing with harp.*

SALMON (*addressing BENJAMIN*). Will not Jephthah accept your invite, that he tarries ?

ISAAC. I saw him this morning, soon after day-break ; and he promised to be here.

AMMINADIB. Soon after daybreak! This is a statement your luxury could scarcely frame. Were you sick, that your habits of indolence were thus invaded by such early rising?

ISAAC. Pardon me, but my life is as active as your own.

AMMINADIB. This is not saying much to your credit: still I doubt it.

ISAAC. Do you call me liar to my face?

AMMINADIB. Nothing so vulgar, I assure you; but many a man flatters himself that he is what he is not, and that he does what he does not.

ISAAC. Understand this (*lays his hand on his sword*), that such insolence will not from me pass lightly; and I call you traducer to your face.

AMMINADIB. I would as soon you called it me there as at my back or feet. Words such as yours are but a collection of gas, poured through an orifice made by the lips of certain shape.

ISAAC. They would be daggers to any but a thick-skinned coward.

BENJAMIN. My brothers, this is not talk worthy of the hour, nor of the great occasion which brings us here. Let us divest our mind of all personal feeling, and fill our brain with those high thoughts demanded by the religious duty of offering up a human victim at the shrine of Freedom.

AMMINADIB. Let him talk! His courage lies deep; and, in throwing off the froth, he will sooner get at the better sort when occasion calls for it.

ISAAC. But that I've pledged my oath, and have received such insult from Jephthah as cannot easily be wiped out, I'd break myself from this fraternity at a dash.

BENJAMIN (*rising*). Do I hear aright? Does that nobleness of your nature, but so lately adopted, suffer such sudden danger at your hands? Calm your excitement, nor be so readily moved by the wild words of your brother's sport. Remember that the link of fate which shall bind you to leadership lies upon the anvil of the hour; that it may become forged by our approaching deed.

ISAAC. Nor shall you find me coward. Jephthah has stabbed me where most sensitive; and revenge must have its way.

AMMINADIB (*aside*). I wonder what part that is, — not his brains, surely.

BENJAMIN. I do not doubt you. But let us have music until Jephthah comes.

AMMINADIB. Then we'll have both clack and clank; for it may be that the meat we must carve will be seasoned with tongue sauce. Come, boy, play. Here, Isaac, I pledge you friendship (*takes a goblet*); nor deem it hard that an old soldier's words are not so soft and sweet as cates of honey. Boy, play! (*Harpist plays; all seated.*)

(*Enter JEPHTHAH; all rising.*)

JEPHTHAH. I am glad to find you mirthful.

BENJAMIN. Hail to you! We have been waiting your arrival; and apprehension had begun to wriggle through my brain, of disappointment.

JEPHTHAH. Nay: I would not deceive you.

ISAAC (*aside*). He thinks it adds to his dignity to keep us waiting.

BENJAMIN. Now you have come, cast aside all thoughts of care; and let us pass the hour in jollity.

JEPHTHAH. For this purpose am I here; and, in relieving the mind from graver considerations, I seek a stimulus for further action.

BENJAMIN. Then let us pledge our friendship in the wine-cup.

JEPHTHAH. I drink not before eating.

AMMINADIB (*aside*). He is a sensible man: he regards his stomach.

ISAAC (*aside*). Has he scented our project?

BENJAMIN. In honor of my guest I cease persuasion. May I inquire if from the Ammonites, those children of the desert, there are any tidings? It is near the time of harvest; and at this season they make incursion rife.

JEPHTHAH. I have this day received a messenger, who tells me they are restless, and that this restlessness increases as the pasture becomes dried up.

BENJAMIN. I suppose there soon will be more annoyance from them; but, under your leadership, victory is secure.

JEPHTHAH. I had rather the responsibility rested on another.

ISAAC (*aside*). 'Tis false! or he would yield authority to his superior.

AMMINADIB (*aside*). Is that to yourself, my brother?

BENJAMIN. It would be an unwelcome hour for our family should Jephthah refuse to lead us against our foes. All are not born leaders. In such tribal warfare as our own, a leader must be a man of head, of heart, and arm. His force arises from his example as from his counsel. The dictates of his brain must quiver along the muscles of his arm, that precept may be led on by personal bravery.

JEPHTHAH. It is not a bed of roses on which to rest one's spirit, where motive may be clothed in hideous form by the power of jealousy, and every act, as transparent as the noonday, become veiled in dense obscurity by fraternal envy. All think they can lead; and for my own part I would the honor rested with them.

BENJAMIN. Happily our family is an exception; for blinded and base must be that son of Gilead who fails to see, and yield a reverence too, to the success which has attended your fraternal guidance.

JEPHTHAH. It would be folly to deny that we have held our own, and more, during the past

few years ; and I should become despicable in my own esteem did I ignore it, and by apparent repudiation attempt to win applause. But I would be worse than this, an infidel to my sacred faith, did I forget that to our fathers' God belongs the honor of our triumphs. He holds the balances of success, and turns the scale as suits his wisdom, his justice, and his love.

BENJAMIN. Never was such dignity worn with greater grace. To hear you speak is as walking in dells where grows the tender floweret. Your words are as their rich perfume, floating upward from a cause unseen, because hidden by the modesty which brings them forth.

AMMINADIB (*aside to ISAAC*). If lies had legs, they would stick in Benjamin's throat, and choke him.

ISAAC (*aside*). Bah ! Such folly is contemptible.

JEPHTHAH. Let us to the table, and give practical proof that we appreciate your hospitality. (*All seat themselves*).

BENJAMIN. Brothers, you are welcome ; and I pray you deal justly with my desire to make you welcome, in your doings toward the bounties of the table.

ISAAC. Jephthah is good at a trencher.

AMMINADIB. It might be well for you should he disregard calf's head.

SALMON. It will aid digestion to indulge in humor.

ISAAC. If the sauce be not too biting.

AMMINADIB. The hotter the blood, the more pungent must be the condiments.

BENJAMIN. Jephthah, what serious thing has struck you?

JEPHTHAH. 'Twas but the shadow of a passing thought.

BENJAMIN. Let us banish for a time all care, and yield to the merry call of mirth. Brothers, here's to the health of Jephthah! Let us drink it standing. (*All arise, and take goblets.*)

JEPHTHAH. In responding to your kindly feeling let me say, the honor you have conferred upon me of your own free choice has ever been to me a law, binding my thought, guiding my desire, and controlling my action. For you I have lived: for you I would have sought my death upon the field. As a soldier I have spent my manhood days; and in a way worthy of a soldier will I seek my end. I come at your desire to attend this feast; but know, O traitors! I come not here that as a dog I might be killed. This goblet you have made the chariot of death: it was by means of this I was to be dismissed from earth. But know, thou villain, your treachery has been discovered; and upon the ground I pour the poison that was to have released my soul. Start not! A soldier's

death does not affright me. Now let the bravest come; and (*draws*) he shall find me ready to defend myself, or die. Come, thou arch-plotter, thou base flatterer, that with honied speech would have inveigled me to ruin, — come! I challenge you to combat, or this sword's point shall search the inmost of thy treacherous heart.

BENJAMIN. Brothers, seize him! (*All draw.*)

JEPHTHAH. Back! He who touches me dies.

BENJAMIN. Seize him!

JEPHTHAH. Have I not one friend among you?

ISAAC. Die, usurper! (*Strikes at JEPHTHAH.*)

JEPHTHAH. It is no cowardice to retire before a crowd of villains. (*JEPHTHAH retires to the wing: confusion. Curtain falls.*)

SCENE II. *Scene in JEPHTHAH'S house. Enter RACHEL, ESTHER, SALOME.*

RACHEL. O Salome! it seems so strange and unnatural! But lately I walked over a pathway strewn with flowers: the sunlight of happiness played around my brow, and my heart leaped in responsive glee. And now I feel that every thing I look upon exhales a poison; every sound I hear is as the cry of terror; and danger, undefined, haunts me at every turn. My life is bitterness; yet would I live for my father's sake.

SALOME. Rachel, I share your sorrow; and

every feeling of your grief awakens a response within my heart: to me, too, it is as though life had changed, and that things are as they were not. Even in my dreams my thoughts are haunted; and a coming evil seems to throw its shadow over me.

ESTHER. What is the next nonsense we shall hear? Dreams are composed of about one-third what we wish to have, and the rest what we fear we shall never get. I have no faith in dreams. If persons in sleep hear the rain patter, they at once dream they are falling over a cataract; and, should they but hear a mouse squeak, they fancy it to be the cry of murder, and feel the knife of the assassin at their throat. All your talk, ladies, is nothing more than a fit of the vapors,—nothing more, I assure you. Fasting for one week, and strong exertion, would clear your brain.

SALOME (*aside*). A creature without soul!

RACÆL. Have you seen my father?

SALOME. I heard that he has gone to feast with Benjamin.

RACHEL. With whom? Heaven defend him!

ESTHER. He has considerable skill in defending himself; nor will he easily yield to opposition.

SALOME. There is a noise without. Hark! What is it? (*Noise without.*)

(*Enter MESSENGER.*)

MESSENGER. Jephthah, O Jephthah!

RACHEL. Speak! What ails my father?

MESSENGER. Jephthah is attacked: his life is in danger; and he has fled.

RACHEL. My father! Whither has he gone? Where can I find him? Has the treachery ripened into action? Ladies, can you not help me?

SALOME. I feel powerless in such a moment; but my heart bleeds for you.

ESTHER. Better that your hands should work at such a time than that your heart should bleed.

(*Enter REUBEN.*)

REUBEN. Rachel, I come a messenger from your father. Jealousy in the family led to plotting against him, which he discovered, and, exposing it with the boldness and bravery of his nature, aroused them to open violence.

RACHEL. Is he living?

REUBEN. He is: but, overwhelmed by numbers, he fled; and this is the message he has sent to you: "My life is saved; but danger forbids my return. In secret will I hide till night: then meet me, conducted hither by Reuben."

RACHEL. My poor father! brave and bold as the lion of the forest, but overpowered by numbers he is now hunted, and couches in retreat as a timid deer. But are *you* faithful? or is your message only a part of this conspiracy?

REUBEN (*showing a ring*). Know you this

ring? This he sends you as a pledge that I have come from him.

RACHEL (*taking ring*). This ring is his; and forgive me that I have doubted your sincerity.

REUBEN. I blame you not; for, when the power of evil is abroad, none can tell what shape it next will take. But to your father I am true, — bound by the ties of gratitude, than which there's nothing stronger. I have but one poor life, and that is either his or yours; for cheerfully will I lose it that I may serve a benefactor.

RACHEL. One flower amidst the weeds; one star amidst the clouds; one friend amidst our many foes.

REUBEN. You credit my report?

RACHEL. I do.

REUBEN. Then wait my coming with the darkness. (*Exit REUBEN.*)

SALOME. These times are awful! One hardly knows what is coming next.

ESTHER. You have no need to dwell longer in ignorance.

(*Enter BENJAMIN, AMMINADIB, ISAAC, SALMON, in haste.*)

BENJAMIN. Is Jephthah here?

ESTHER. You have two eyes: see. Am I Jephthah?

BENJAMIN. Peace, woman!

ESTHER. Is it peace which brings you here?

RACHEL. Seek you my father? He is not here.

ISAAC. We will assure ourselves of that.

RACHEL. Jephthah's daughter has been trained to value honor more than life.

AMMINADIB (*aside*). She is a stone from the old quarry.

ISAAC. Let us hold the daughter as hostage for the appearance of her father. The cry of this fledgling will fetch the old bird to his nest.

RACHEL. Jephthah's daughter for her father dies, but raises no alarm that will compromise his safety.

SALMON. Let us test this boasted virtue.

ESTHER. There must be two to make such bargain. Rachel is under my protection; and the blood of my woman's heart must dye this floor ere you shall touch her.

AMMINADIB (*aside*). That's what I call a woman.

RACHEL. Kinsmen, where lies our transgression that we are thus assailed? What have we done? Has not my father ever sought your welfare? You are not so destitute of appreciation, nor can jealousy so obscure your understanding, that you fail to read his virtues; and were this so, and did the touch of your envy pervert every goodness to a fault, still within my brain and heart there

lives the fact that he is worthy. My father is not here, nor know I where he is; and, did the secret of his hiding rest with me, no threat of yours would force it from me.

ISAAC. Jephthah has revolted from our fraternal rule, has challenged his compeers, and dared us to assert our right to live.

SALMON. Let us hold them all as prisoners of war.

ESTHER. Let him beware who is the first to commence such task!

AMMINADIB. There was a time in our family history, when a man was famous for strength of arm, rather than length of tongue. This made me a soldier; and a soldier still I am. Be it, then, known to you, that, though you have played upon me to question Jephthah's honor, yet the man who lays finger upon the daughter of my old captain — dies. My speech is short; but my sword is sharp.

BENJAMIN. None can question the devotedness of Rachel, nor do we think Amminadib to be wanting in fraternal feeling; but we would see Jephthah, and explain our doings. True to his soldier's courage, when he thought his honest heart to be outraged, his indignation became aroused; and under this feeling he failed to listen to us. Had he but lent an ear, we would have explained that danger was more remote than he supposed; and that the apparent injury we had

for him designed was but the vestibule to a fuller development of our confidence. But the bravest soldier is often wanting in force of policy.

ISAAC (*aside to BENJAMIN*). Is not such talk hypocrisy?

BENJAMIN. Hush! When the fort cannot be carried by direct attack, it must then be invested by slow approaches. Brothers, I regret that Jephthah is not here; but should Rachel see him she will tell him the mistake he made. Pardon our abrupt interview: we were in haste to meet your father, and explain ourselves. We now leave you. Come! (*Exeunt BENJAMIN, SOLOMON, ISAAC.*)

AMMINADIB (*to ESTHER, as he leaves the stage*). Should you desire a soldier for a comrade on life's campaign, raise your standard, and I will be with you. As myself, you are better in your heart than in your looks. Adieu! (*Exit AMMINADIB.*)

SALOME. What dreadful men! I am so glad they are gone.

ESTHER. It is better for some of them; but they are not *all* bad.

RACHEL. My companions, you now see my condition: no longer can I hope that a life of luxury and ease will follow me. Be it so: the hardship of a peasant's life gladly will I endure, that I may serve my father. (*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE III. *Night scene, wild wood. Enter REUBEN and RACHEL.*

REUBEN. Thus far have we come in safety. Stand here and wait until I give the signal. (*Approaches the wing, and whistles.*) No answer: I'll try again.

RACHEL. Has he been discovered?

REUBEN. (*Low whistle in response.*) He hears. His footsteps approach.

(*Enter JEPHTHAH.*)

JEPHTHAH. Has the God of my fathers thus sped thy way?

REUBEN. Rachel is here.

RACHEL (*approaching*). My darling father!

JEPHTHAH (*embracing her*). Child of my joy!

RACHEL. How my heart bleeds for your condition, — forsaken and hunted! What can I do to relieve the anguish filling your soul? whither can I go to find relief for you?

JEPHTHAH. Calm yourself, my child. The greatest causes of anguish to a soul are wounded pride and a guilty conscience. These form a fire from materials within, which, ignited by the match of circumstances, burns in painful fury, and, covering the spirit with its smoke, precludes all hope, and leaves the soul wretched amidst the darkness of disappointment. But from such fire my heart is free. My pride was in my family rather than

myself. For them I labored; nor is there on my conscience aught which can condemn me. Being thus saved from torment from myself, I regret the weakness of humanity as it appears, but am not in anguish.

RACHEL. 'Tis cruel! Oh, 'tis cruel!

JEPHTHAH. The soul of man is as a house which has two windows, looking in opposite directions. One looks toward earth, the other heaven. The earth window of my soul is for the moment obscured, and shows only darkness; but the heaven side is clear, and the eyes of my faith ascend to see the love of God, — *unchangeable*.

RACHEL. Happy religion! It is Mercy's angel watching by earth's children, and in sorrow breathing kindness to their wounded souls.

JEPHTHAH. It is the friend in whom at all times we may rest our confidence. But I sent for you here, not to tell you of my religion (for that is better known by deeds than words), but to tell you that we must for a time be severed.

RACHEL. Say not so: bid me follow you. No hardship will I dread, nor danger fear, if you are with me. I am young: and what my bodily strength shall fail in, my spirit shall command, that I may share your sorrows.

JEPHTHAH. Rachel, parting from you is as tearing from me the tenderest part of my own life. My heart bleeds at the thought; and it is only

as my mind-force is strengthened by prayer to Heaven, that my inclination is restrained from rebelling against the law of necessity. Help me, then, in yielding to my desire. I must away to the mountains; for amidst the fastnesses and wilds of nature alone am I secure. There for a time will I remain; and it may be that in my absence Justice will espouse my cause.

RACHEL. It is hard to part with you; but to ease the anguish of your mind my lips shall be sealed in silence; and I will labor to submit with a grace, the very thought of which shall fall as a sunbeam on your heart.

JEPHTHAH. It will not be long that I shall leave you, nor will you remain alone. None seek to harm you; and, did they act thus, your father's God would vindicate your cause, and prove your guardian. Reuben will be your friend; and, when from me he hears the intelligence that it can be done with safety, he will conduct you to me.

RACHEL (*clasping her hands, and looking upward*). Not my will, but Thine be done!

JEPHTHAH (*to REUBEN*). Reuben, not that I doubt your faithfulness, but that I may ease the heart of Rachel, I ask you to pledge your oath for her protection.

REUBEN (*bending with upraised hand*). My heart is true to you and yours. But, that I may invite the maiden's mind to repose confidence in

my friendship, I swear, When I cease to be the friend of Jephthah and his child, let my mother perish in disgrace; let leprosy seize upon me; let my right hand die by my side; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; let my name be blotted out from the book of life; and let the curses of my people follow my memory forever!

RACHEL. It is enough. I am content.

JEPHTHAH. Then, my child, adieu! One in heart, and one in hope before our God, distance cannot sever us. True, your laughing eyes and sunny looks will be hidden from my gaze; your form, as slender as the gazelle of the hills, I shall not see; the ringing of your voice, which as the liquid music of the purling streamlet, will no longer greet my ear; and a lonely sadness will often fill my soul. Yet when desolation reigns within, and darkens the future of my life, my heart shall dictate, Rachel now prays; and at the thought, upon the mountain's brow I'll bend my knee, and in spirit meet you before the mercy-seat. Circumstances can separate bodies as being tangible to their influence; but religion binds our souls in an unbroken unity. Once more I say, Adieu! Moments are precious for my safety: may the God of our fathers bless you! (*Taking one hand, placing the other on her bended head.*)

RACHEL. Farewell! separated yet united. Farewell! (*Pass off on either side, waving an adieu.* JEPHTHAH alone; RACHEL with REUBEN.)

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Village street. Enter JESSE.*

JESSE. I am glad he has got off so lightly. Murder was their intent, although they concealed it from me. It is good sometimes to be cross-eyed, especially with the eyes of the mind, that one may look around corners, and see what is hidden behind a wall of words. The sounds of words are sometimes like the lids of a book, — no indicator of the contents within. Here comes Amminadib.

(*Enter AMMINADIB.*)

AMMINADIB. Well, young beardless.

JESSE. Not beardless, quite; although my beard is down.

AMMINADIB. My speech this morning must be slow; for I am *down* in the mouth.

JESSE. This is what makes your voice so thick: it must be hard to speak through feathers. What have you done with Jephthah?

AMMINADIB. I was a fool that —

JESSE. There is no need to preface your story with a fact that's fully known.

AMMINADIB. Silence! Boys, as cats, should be seen and not be heard.

JESSE. Still they may mew when another wags his tail. Now for your story.

AMMINADIB. I was a fool —

JESSE (*aside*). That's true !

AMMINADIB. That I lent my ears to that arch conspirator Benjamin.

JESSE. This proves the preface to your story that you are foolish true ; for fools always hang out the sign, " Ears to let for gossip or for slander."

AMMINADIB. I feel so angry with myself for being seduced to act against my captain, that I could eat my own head.

JESSE. An ass's head is sometimes eaten in time of famine ; and it seems a poverty in good temper, arising from your own folly, would lead you to eat your own.

AMMINADIB. A soldier is wedded to his leader.

JESSE. That may be true ; but it seems an easy thing to get a divorce.

AMMINADIB. I deserve your mockery. Indeed, I mock myself ; for every deed of bravery I have performed seems blotted out by such an act of treachery. I have known pains from wounds in arms, in limbs, and head ; but they were as nothing when compared with pain of heart. This makes a coward of me ; and in my penitence I am as weak as a child.

JESSE. Let your penitence be marked by reformation ; and, having injured the father, make atonement for the wrong in defending his child from harm.

AMMINADIB. She is secure.

JESSE. Of this I am not so certain. Who comes this way? Let us stand aside. (*Retire to the wing.*)

(*Enter BENJAMIN and ISAAC.*)

ISAAC. It appears to me I am no nearer being chosen the leader of our people than when Jephthah was here.

BENJAMIN. Patience! Your feelings are as the wild rushing of waters, which, being long held back, dash forward with a force that's uncontrollable. It was but the other day your mind was stagnant on your right to leadership; and, now I have broken down the dam, you fain would grasp it at a stroke. Be calm: the strength of policy lies in patience.

ISAAC. Did I but listen to you only that my virtue might be tested? I never assumed such excellency as to challenge circumstances to exert themselves upon it, that I might advertise my strength of goodness to the world.

BENJAMIN. Nor did I suspect you of such act, nor do I place strain upon your virtue now from caprice; but in this it is imperative that matters should wear the semblance of nature, although created only of our own desire.

ISAAC. Acting comes not kindly from me.

BENJAMIN. Be natural, then; for naturalness

is alike the soul of acting and of poetry. This change in our choice of leader, whatever it may be in fact, must not appear to be the result of convulsion; for this thing shows itself to others in a different aspect from what we see it; and did they but observe the print of plot upon it, although themselves are ripe for conspiracy, they would abhor it with all the gravity of seeming virtue, and condemn us for our doings in the strongest terms. No, no! in any matter that may challenge suspicion of motive, we must labor to give it the appearance of being the legitimate child of incidents.

ISAAC. I see your argument; but my heart refuses to recognize what appears clear to my mind's eye.

BENJAMIN. Let me, then, give you further reason. Jephthah — although detested of ourselves for his ambition, and that usurpation which would make us cringing courtiers at his feet, or menials or slaves — has still his partisans. These linger around him, and in secret speak of his goodness. They do not openly espouse his cause; for he is in shadow, and they care not to embroil themselves in his affairs. But let some incident from ourselves, however feeble, fall across the ebbing tide of his popularity, and stop its reflux toward oblivion; and they who now confine their sympathy within themselves, and hide from him

the feeling of their heart when most he needs it, would then at once proclaim themselves his friends, and in the wild rush of their feeling would sweep us away. The friends of the waning man retire as he recedes; but, should he halt in his retreat, they then peep forth, regret they have been in ignorance of his condition, and proffer aid, which, but they see he can help himself again, would never have been tendered. There is but one security for the success of our plot. Jephthah must die.

ISAAC. He has fled to the mountains, and being there is beyond our reach.

BENJAMIN. His body only is there: his heart is here; and, had we that, we would care nothing for his carcass.

ISAAC. I see not your meaning.

BENJAMIN. His daughter is in our midst; and Jephthah is not but where she is. She is his light, his soul, his life.

ISAAC. What does that avail us?

BENJAMIN. This. Seize his daughter; keep her in custody; and when the cry of the imprisoned child shall reach the mountain, his father's heart will burn for her release, and he will defy death itself but he will yield her help. This will bring him again to the plains; and, ere his foot shall stride the valley but a cubit's length, he shall measure his form upon the ground a stiffen-

ing corpse. This would give you ease and permanence in your new position; and this I would be ready to impart to you before you ascend to power.

ISAAC. It is kind of you; but, from the force of brain yourself doth show in this, I feel that leadership belongs alone to you.

BENJAMIN. I a leader! 'Tis the last of my thoughts; nor could fate itself constrain me to accept a position I am so incompetent to fulfil. This lot is yours; but you must further act.

ISAAC. In what way? name it; for I long to grasp the power that Destiny, even in your refusal, seems to confirm me in.

BENJAMIN. To-night make captive of Jephthah's daughter, and hold her until she is sought for. Having done this, meet me at my tent. Adieu! (*Exit BENJAMIN.*)

ISAAC. How strong his affection for me! He seems my Providence, conducting me to a higher sphere; but, as Providence does, he leads me through dark avenues to a lighted place. Rachel must be my prisoner. Well, I am content. Her uncle only will be her guardian. (*Exit ISAAC.*)

(*Re-enter AMMINADIB, JESSE.*)

AMMINADIB. There is an aristocracy among devils; and Benjamin is the prince. What a thick-headed brute I must have been ever to have

suffered myself to be beguiled by him ! Used only to the sour, sharp word of command, I didn't know the taste of tender speech, until as a fly in a honey-pot I became stuck fast. But now I'll clean my feathers, and sharpen my sting too ; and Amminadib shall again be Jephthah's friend.

JESSE. Nor shall you be that alone.

AMMINADIB. That is so ; for I'll try, when I am at it, to get yon fighting damsel to be a friend to me.

JESSE. I did not mean that. I meant that I, too, would be his friend.

AMMINADIB. I have lived long enough to doubt everybody ; but, if you will, then follow me. (*Exeunt AMMINADIB, JESSE.*)

SCENE II. *Scene in JEPHTHAH'S house. Enter AMMINADIB and ESTHER.*

AMMINADIB. You may well doubt my sincerity ; for, having taken sides against Jephthah, my return to him can only be received with suspicion. But, did you know Benjamin's tongue as well as I, you would no longer think it impossible for me now to be sincere, although for the time a traitor.

ESTHER. It would be more manly could you say, " He strove to seduce me from my allegiance, and failed."

AMMINADIB. I know it ; and, if every penitent has such a hard road to travel to get back to the

path of right, I no longer wonder that some of them refuse to engage in the task.

ESTHER. Sin punishes itself.

AMMINADIB. Except when it delegates the power to a young lady. Sin, when it works alone, punishes with whips; but when it passes the work to you it punishes with scorpions. It would have pleased me better to have come to you as a soldier with open front and with nodding plume, than with bent brow, and crippled from my own offending. But next to health enjoyed is the hope of returning toward health; and on this way, although thorny and hard to travel for wounded pride, I now meet with you, and say, Give me your confidence, nor fear the result; for, the fracture in my reputation being mended, it shall be found stronger than in its native strength, although not so sightly. Be not, then, too hard upon an old soldier.

ESTHER. Hardness is not in woman's nature: through her mind a stream of pity ever flows; and her compassion stands ready to heal and to hide the wounds of humanity. But 'tis not woman's policy always to show this feeling: even her strongest love must sometimes remain concealed behind a wall of indifference and even harshness, raised by her fears for personal safety.

AMMINADIB. Your words to me are life. My heart is as a pitcher that has been cracked, but, be-

ing cemented with penitence, can now carry all your love securely.

ESTHER. But who desires a cracked heart? Yet I might take it for its novelty, and place it on exhibition; for broken-hearted men are scarce.

AMMINADIB. Were your features as fascinating as your tongue, I should lose all hope; for even Pharaoh of Egypt might then seek you for a wife.

ESTHER. There are some who call themselves soldiers, who can be moved by *other* tongues than those of women. But what of Rachel?

AMMINADIB. It was of her I came to speak; but the sweet music of your voice charmed my thoughts to sleep. How wise of nature to place such a sweet tongue in such a homely face!

ESTHER. This is not the hour to trifle. If I understand matters it is deeds, not words, that now are wanting.

AMMINADIB. Such is the case: and your good sense endears you to me; for your practicalness would make a lamb's head go further than some persons' whole sheep. But that girl must be at once removed. I know their plot; but before they have her they must take my life.

ESTHER. This is good liquor for such a cracked pitcher to contain; and, should you keep to this, I may myself yet stop and drink.

AMMINADIB. Your sweet face reflected in such

liquor would wear a charm. Here come Jesse and Reuben.

(*Enter JESSE and REUBEN.*)

REUBEN. Amminadib here in company?

AMMINADIB. There were two of us here when we met; but since our meeting one half of myself has run to her, so that we are now only one and a half.

JESSE. You might both gain by losing the other half.

AMMINADIB. Well done, young beardless.

JESSE. Reuben, you may trust Amminadib; for no truer heart beats toward Jephthah.

REUBEN. It is well; for this night may try our firmest courage. Esther, retire, and make ready Rachel for her journey. Now, do you both swear friendship toward our endeavor? (*Exit ESTHER.*)

JESSE. I do; and, should I fail, then let me perish, and let the vultures of the desert feast upon my carcass.

AMMINADIB. My tongue may well be silent, bound by the thongs of conscious weakness; yet, at the risk of creating contempt against myself, I say, This body, stiffened by the touch of death, shall call the eagles of the wilderness to a morning banquet ere Jephthah's daughter shall be captured.

REUBEN. Well done, old soldier! I repose confidence in your devotedness. This, then, is my

purpose. Let us, when the twilight blends into the darker night, meet by the rock which forms the boundary of the street of Gilead : I will have Rachel there ; and from that point we will make for the mountains. In the mean time conceal your thoughts even from your features, lest they should betray the doings of your mind to the lynx eyes of those surrounding you. Learn as much of their intentions as you can ; for this is a war of love, and strategy must be met with its kind. This is not the place for us to appear in company. You go that road ; and I will follow at my leisure. (*Exeunt* JESSE and AMMINADIB.) They are true, I think ; and, did I think otherwise, I would stop their treachery at a stroke ; for treachery, as a serpent, must not be played with. But I will trust them.

(*Enter* SALOME.)

SALOME. What awful times ! There is danger everywhere.

REUBEN. When is there not ? Danger is ever near, although it may not show itself so plainly. It is dangerous to walk the fields ; for one might tread upon a thorn, and cause his death : so it is to eat one's dinner ; for he might be choked by a hair.

SALOME. Do you think we can escape ? Would it not be better that I should remain behind ?

REUBEN. Would you leave Rachel in her hour of trial ? Has not her father been your guardian and your constant friend ?

SALOME. This is true ; but, if I have to pay the price of life for his goodness, how can he be called my benefactor ?

REUBEN. Is it from such mercenary motives you would act ? Such friendship may I never know !

SALOME. I wish we were well out of it ; for it seems to me I can hope to get nothing by this but a cold, rheumatics, or the loss of life. Still I suppose I must do it for a name. What a deal of goodness is performed only for a name ! Dear me ! to run the risk of losing my life, that I may get a name, seems as mournful a task as writing an epitaph for one's own tombstone.

(Enter RACHEL equipped for travel.)

RACHEL. Reuben, I fear you run too great a risk for me. How good of you thus to care for my father ! There is in this but one thing I regret ; and it is that I expose another than myself to danger. Alone I would wander forth and take all risk, or die in resisting all attempts against me.

REUBEN. You must do neither. I have pledged my word to Jephthah ; and you must escape and live. There are three of us armed ; and urged by devotedness we shall be as three-score.

RACHEL. Count two more. Esther is aroused ; and woe to the man, although a son of Anak, who

should cross her path! Nor will I stand idly by when danger is abroad. The spirit of my father flows within my veins; I feel it throbbing now; it makes my courage supernatural; and where my friends fall there will be found, dead and cold, the body of Jephthah's daughter.

(*Enter ESTHER.*)

ESTHER. 'Tis time we were away. Amminadib has sent me word their scouts are out. This moment a stranger came to the door, and, looking in, passed on. But I fear not: myself and my soldier shall take the first six. (*Shows a dagger.*)

REUBEN. Let us hasten.

RACHEL. We yield. Thou God of my father, be our protector! (*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE III. JEPHTHAH *alone in the mountains.*

Enter JEPHTHAH.

JEPHTHAH. Banished! What word more terrible? The ties of life severed, and the link which binds me to the race snapped asunder. The link is a living one; and, being broken, the torn ends quiver in the agony of separation. Dreary the world appears to a lone man; and the pangs inflicted by such severance are exquisite. In such a condition memory is active, and hope stands silent by. The past arises in its tenderest mood; and the details of pleasant recollections crowd upon the brain in

beauty enhanced by distance. These call to the soul in familiar voices, which as sweet music charm the spirit, and summon it to indulge in fancied delights, until stern fact sweeps away the vision, and leaves the heart frightened at itself in the midst of solitude. Now before my mind troop absent friends, and that dear child, dearer to me than life. I see them all: I hear their song and laughter as in former days. They greet me as a friend; and the warm breath of childhood's kiss, as incense from the altar of filial love, falls upon my cheek. This scene robs me of courage: my heart sinks; and the evening breeze, moaning among these rocks, as it ushers in advancing night, sings the requiem of my fading hopes. To-night is solitude, — to-morrow loneliness: thus the future is shrouded in the gloom of uncertainty; and I, a fugitive from those I love, stand here helpless in my aimlessness. These feelings crush my spirit, and leave me but a wreck of my former self. They paralyze my noblest powers; and I seem as a stranded waif upon the shore of circumstances. Shall I despair? My manhood trembles at the thought, and in its weakness whispers, It must be so. But my soul arises on the wings of religious faith, and floats me upward. In feeling I pass from earth: the night lamps of the sky I leave behind me; I stand within the portals of the infinite; God is felt around me;

the passing of his presence fans my hope again to activity ; my energies revive ; I triumph over the immediate ; the future breaks as with eye of morning upon my soul ; and I am once more a man. Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his refuge. O religion ! they who have thee not are poor indeed. Hark ! 'tis the howl of the leopard seeking her nightly banquet. I fear not now, since God is with me ; but I must seek a shelter from the falling dew. Who is this advancing through the gloom ?

(*Enter HERMIT.*)

HERMIT. Jephthah !

JEPHTHAH. Come you as an enemy, or a friend ? (*Draws.*)

HERMIT. As both friend and enemy. The friend am I of the righteous, but of evil the uncompromising foe.

JEPHTHAH. Then advance ; for you are harmless.

HERMIT. Harmless only on the side of truth ; but error I spare not, and with the sword of wrath would hew it to pieces.

JEPHTHAH. Righteousness without mercy is the most awful conception of the human brain. But what brings you to this solitude ?

HERMIT. Hatred of evil. Being weary of a life of sin, I fled from its abode ; and on these

mountains, surrounded only with the innocence of nature, I cultivate companionship with the pure, and until the ethereal of my existence now leads my thoughts, and governs my desires.

JEPHTHAH. I fear you are too good for my company.

HERMIT. Wherefore is this, seeing you seek acquaintance with the Purest?

JEPHTHAH. He suits a man; for with purity he mingles sympathy. But you are righteous without compassion.

HERMIT. There is truth in this. But I come not here to tell of my purity or my faults. I have known yourself when by yourself unknown, and am come to reckon with you for deeds performed.

JEPHTHAH. I am armed, and therefore prepared.

HERMIT. Armed you may be, but prepared you are not. Your boasted prowess and glittering sword shall be but as a wind-dried reed before my hermit's staff. I challenge your resistance. Now, guard! (*Raises his staff.*)

JEPHTHAH. This insolence to a stranger? Although an outcast I am still a soldier; and I defy you to the contest.

HERMIT. (*Lowering his staff.*) The same brave Jephthah, a prince among the sons of men! Not to reckon with you for deeds of wrong am I come hither; for wrong from your hands men do not re-

ceive. It is to overcome you with my sense of gratitude I now approach. The deed may be blotted from your memory as being too poor to linger there ; but within my brain it lives, and ever will. It was when destruction from Israel's foes assailed my humble home upon the plain, and the life of myself and darling child — now in heaven — was in peril, your brave arm rescued us, and set us free. Scenes sad and sorrowful since then have crossed my path, and driven me forth to lead a mountain life ; but never has your kindness been forgotten. I heard of your distress and your retreat, and sought you out that I might be your friend.

JEPHTHAH. What pledge have I that you are not a spy upon my track ?

HERMIT. The hunted stag trembles at every rustling noise. I sympathize with you, nor have I pledge to offer you but this : I fear the God of our fathers, and place in him my only confidence for life and death.

JEPHTHAH. The man who fears God will not harm his fellow. I ask no further proof.

HERMIT. Then follow me. This mountain is not so lonely as it seems. Within yonder cave are fifty men, who lead a mountain life, free from the oppressor's power. These saw you wandering alone, and, receiving kindness from you in former times, have sent me forth to bid you welcome to

their midst. Fear them not, for they, too, worship God; and I among them live their humble priest. Receive also these tidings: your daughter lives, and soon will join you.

JEPHTHAH. How strange the ways of Providence! Seeds of kindness, planted along life's road, and trampled out of sight by crowding incidents, are still preserved, and in the desert of one's loneliness and sadness spring forth, and yield a fragrance and delight which cheer the heart. Lead: I follow.

HERMIT. Kindness, as its author, is immortal. It may sleep forgotten through a generation, but will appear and yield returns when least expected. (*Exeunt HERMIT and JEPHTHAH.*)

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *Mountain scene. Two ARABS sitting on the ground, casting lots.*

1ST ARAB. This is the game: he who pulls the longest straw twice out of three times, wins.

2D ARAB. I'm not lucky. I would rather run or wrestle or jump, to win the prize.

1ST ARAB. You say the ring is yours: I say 'tis not. You say you lost it after you had found it: I say I found it, and you did not lose it. And, that we may tell who speaks the truth, let Fate decide. Are you ready?

2D ARAB. It is useless objecting when power is against one.

1ST ARAB. Then we'll proceed. The first to me. (*Pulls a long straw from a number he holds in his hand.*)

2D ARAB. Ye Fates, defend me! (*Pulls a short straw.*)

1ST ARAB. Your first prayer has missed its mark: try again.

2D ARAB. When you've had your turn.

1ST ARAB. 'Tis ordered so in the Book of Fate. (*Pulls another long straw.*)

2D ARAB. Blind Fate, in the twilight of wisdom, wrote your name opposite to my luck, and thus makes fools of us both.

1ST ARAB. It is my game.

2D ARAB. And my ring.

1ST ARAB. Yours in claim; but Fate has decided that it should be mine in fact.

2D ARAB. I despise a fate which rejects me, and believe its doings to be only caprice.

1ST ARAB. That is way of the world. Let Fate but give us what we seek, and we exclaim, How good! how kind! how wise! But let it thwart our purposes, and we say, Blind and mistaken Fate!

2D ARAB. There is some one coming: this is no mistake. (*ARABS rising.*)

(*Enter* JESSE *and* AMMINADIB.).

JESSE. Know you where Jephthah holds his camp?

1ST ARAB. Our captain's quarters are not far from hence. Seek you his tent?

JESSE. It is my wish to see him.

1ST ARAB. Follow me. (*Exeunt all.*)

(*Scene changes to a cave. JEPHTHAH surrounded by MOUNTAINEERS and HERMITS.*)

(*Enter* ARAB, *bending low.*)

1ST ARAB. A messenger seeks Jephthah.

JEPHTHAH. Whence comes he?

1ST ARAB. From the plains; and from appearance he is a Hebrew.

JEPHTHAH. Bid him approach. (*Exit* ARAB.)

HERMIT. He comes with tidings. Hearken! 'twas in the dead of night that I, alone upon the mountain's brow, listening, in the silence of that hour which forms the parting line of days, for voices from the upper world, heard mention of the name of Jephthah. Eagerly attent I stood, that I might further glean of knowledge. I strained my eyes to see; and before me there passed, in garb of glory, beings from the spirit-world. Never before did vision appear so plainly. At sight of them my hair stood upright on my head; my eye-balls gleamed; and my brain, no longer subject to the

control of will, vaulted in strange vagaries, filling me with thoughts and feelings inexpressible; while my flesh, as though ashamed of its own mortality, trembled and crept upon my bones, as if to hide itself from the presence of such deathlessness. I stood riveted to the spot: the heavens were illumined with a divine refulgence; and upon the firmament I read, as though written in characters of fire, words which seemed marked upon the tablet of the sky as instruction for angels, "Jephthah will be sought for by his brethren, and must return to save them." Then the vision ceased; and the howling of the jackal amidst the darkness was all I heard.

JEPHTHAH (*rising*). 'Tis very strange! How narrow the line between this state of man's being and the next! It is but a wall of flesh, yet a wall impenetrable, a barrier which robs us of sights and sounds wonderful, beautiful, divine. Well may the restless spirit sometimes long for the removal of this obstacle, that it may escape to greater freedom and to higher joys.

(*Enter* JESSE and AMMINADIB.)

AMMINADIB (*falling before* JEPHTHAH). Pardon, my worthy captain!

JEPHTHAH. What! one of my old soldiers? Arise: the bended knee is not the posture for a follower of Jephthah.

AMMINADIB (*rising*). True. Had I my deserts, a narrow bed of earth would snugly enwrap me. I did you wrong ; and I crave your grace.

JEPHTHAH. The heart of my soldiers can never go against me. Their head may tremble under influences hostile to my happiness, and it may for a season hurl them from my side ; but, when such passion has passed away, their heart will lead them back to me.

AMMINADIB. 'Tis true. There are but two things I desire, — a leader and a wife, but not a leader in a wife. I will follow my leader : my wife must follow me, although she need not keep far behind ; but she mustn't go ahead.

JEPHTHAH. Is it for these you seek me ?

AMMINADIB. Ask Jesse ; for my soldier's brain has got confused.

JEPHTHAH (*taking the hand of JESSE*). My youngest brother ! True when all others fled me, and, after my departure, faithful to her whom I love more than life ! Why seek you your outlawed brother ?

JESSE. I come as a messenger from our family, to ask for your return. Jealousy, with its gnawing tooth, crept in upon their confidence, and fattened at their expense. Under its action, their thoughts became distorted ; and in fancy they saw themselves happier if you were dead. But this delirium has passed away before the stern power

of fact; and in the presence of hostile forces, without a leader, they are helpless. They now call for you. It is the cry of their penitence; and, as Heaven deals with the contrite, forgive them.

JEPHTHAH. Had another than yourself brought this message, I might have doubted. But coming from your honest lips, and confirmed by one whose being is less of earth than heaven, I consent to return. Followers! let us prepare to march upon the plain. (*To JESSE.*) Come you to my family. (*Exeunt all.*)

AMMINADIB. I shall go too, and get another look at the girl whom Fate has destined to be a soldier's wife. (*Exit AMMINADIB.*)

SCENE II. *Country scene. The meeting of JEPHTHAH and brothers. Enter JEPHTHAH, JESSE, AMMINADIB, and REUBEN, from right wing; BENJAMIN, SALMON, and ISAAC, from the left.*

BENJAMIN (*advancing*). The first in fault, I come the first to seek forgiveness from the lips of Jephthah. I stand confessed. In thought or act of wrong, the heart becomes shaded by the force of evil, which chills the conscience into inactivity, and distorts the reason. These rulers of our moral being crippled, it is as when a ship upon the water loses her helm, and becomes the unresisting victim of changing currents. I own the wrong

of which I am guilty ; and my confession is but the expression that I am wiser now than in the past.

JEPHTHAH. To be revenged is now within my power : nor think me so insensate as not to feel the bitter wrongs you have oppressed me with. You sought my life. What had I done to merit this ? It would be ignoble in me to recount my deeds under present circumstances, and to tell out my virtues at this hour. The fires of reflection must flash them on to the tablet of your mind ; and your own conscience is my most powerful pleader with your soul. But think not your ingratitude remains unfelt. I feel it all ; and the agony I endured as its result crowds in fresh force upon my spirit. Was it nothing, that I should have to draw my sword in self-defence against my brothers ? Was it nothing, that I should have to endure the agony of a father's soul for the safety of his child ? Was it nothing, that I should be driven from my father's house, to seek an asylum in the mountain-wilds ? Fools can only be wounded skin-deep with the sharpest weapon ; and a kiss, though but of mock friendship, will heal their ugliest gash : but into the heart of men of thought the wound goes deep ; and from their very thoughtfulness it rankles wildly. They feel and seek revenge. So would my manhood seek revenge on you. It calls with-

in my soul; it troops across my brain; it flashes along every nerve; my hand trembles; and my very fingers are restless for revenge. But I fear God. In this one sentence lies an infinitude of power. This restrains my passion; this brings before me claims of brotherly love; and this leads me to pronounce the words — which seem rather God's than mine — I FORGIVE.

BENJAMIN. 'Tis noble. Better could I bear your vengeance than forgiveness. Your vengeance might despatch that wretched thing called life from its earthly quarters, and send me to the sleep of death; but your forgiveness crumples my spirit into such insignificance that I feel disgusted with myself; and, only for my family, I would say, Let loose your strongest indignation, and consume me!

JEPHTHAH. Do you despise my mercy?

BENJAMIN. I do not: I dread it. I am no longer Benjamin, but a thing contemptible.

SALMON. This struggling of your dying pride will presently give way to feelings of gratitude. Mortification is the attendant on wrong-doing, that men may die to sin, and rise again to righteousness. Jephthah, I gladly accept your pardon, and welcome you to our midst as our only hope for deliverance.

ISAAC. The bubble of my conceit has been pricked with the pin of incidents; and I have col-

lapsed. I have learned that it is not conceit nor ambition nor simple courage, that can make a successful leader. Experience, and that power of heart which can control its emotions, are imperative. In these I have failed, and accept the pardon of Jephthah, bidding him a welcome return.

JEPHTHAH. Where lies the danger?

ISAAC. The Ammonites have invaded our possessions.

JEPHTHAH. Ancient and restless foes of Israel, yet brave and persistent.

SALMON. But under your leadership we fear them not.

JEPHTHAH. The victory on the field of strife comes from God.

ISAAC. Then he will give it you.

JEPHTHAH. This is my stipulation ere a sword be drawn in this threatening strife: that, if I engage to enter on this struggle, I shall henceforth be your leader.

ALL. You shall.

JEPHTHAH. You swear it.

ALL. We swear it.

JEPHTHAH. By all that's sacred.

ALL. By all that's sacred.

JEPHTHAH. O thou Deliverer of the oppressed! before thy providence man may for a time be crushed; he may seem abandoned; his cause may

sink before the power of evil; and his righteous soul, as a wanderer amidst the darkness of night, may grope its starless way uncheered by hope: but from the depths of obscurity shall he arise, and on the lighted plain once more behold thy goodness and thy wisdom. Thus dost thou deal with me. Guided by thy hand I engage myself to this request of my brothers; and now I pledge my solemn word, my oath, and all that is sacred to my manhood being, that, if thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be that whatsoever first cometh forth out of the doors of mine house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's; and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. Come: let us each one now harness himself for the strife; and may Heaven defend the right!

ALL. Amen! (*Exeunt ALL.*)

SCENE III. *Village street. Organ playing, "See the Conquering Hero comes." Music low and distant. Enter BOYS.*

1ST BOY. Jephthah returns to-day from the fight.

2D BOY. He comes in triumph too. I hear the music of his marching host.

1ST BOY. Let us hasten, and tell Rachel the news.

2D BOY. Her heart will bound with joy at his return. (*Exeunt BOYS.*)

(*Music sounds louder. Noise without. Enter JEPHTHAH and SOLDIERS.*)

JEPHTHAH. Once more the street of old Gilead resounds with gladness.

(*Enter RACHEL, ESTHER, SALOME.*)

RACHEL. My father, your daughter bids you welcome.

JEPHTHAH. Heaven sustain me! (*Falls upon the shoulder of AMMINADIB.*)

RACHEL (*approaching*). What ails my father? Is he sick? or does my presence pain him?

JEPHTHAH (*clasping his hands*). Wretched! Wretched! Most miserable of mortals!

RACHEL. My father, tell your child your sorrow.

JEPHTHAH. Why was I not slain upon the battle-field, rather than to endure this grief?

RACHEL. Is the secret too solemn for mine ear? What have I done? what is required of me, that my presence should fill you with such anguish?

JEPHTHAH. Oh that my heart would burst! that the ties of mortality would snap and set me free!

RACHEL. Tell me, most noble father, and, even if it be my life you seek, take it.

JEPHTHAH. Benjamin, as restitution for the past, tell her. The words cannot come from me: my lips are sealed in the silence of grief. Tell her.

RACHEL. O mine uncle! listen to his voice; this once do his bidding, and tell me all. Poor heart! has the anguish of the past, with the excitement of the present, overturned his brain? Tell me, lest my heart break and my soul burst in anguish arising from my ignorance.

BENJAMIN. It is a painful duty; and would it had fallen to the lot of another! but the tale is simple, although the telling of it is as reading your death-warrant. Your father, on the eve of battle, vowed to the God of Israel, that, should victory crown his arms, he would in sacrifice offer the first thing that came out of his house to meet him on his return. This is yourself.

RACHEL. Merciful Heaven!

JEPHTHAH (*trembling*). See, see! She weeps. O God, sustain her!

RACHEL. To die! How distant seemed the day when I should die! My life is only in the morning; and, ere the sun of my existence reaches high noon, it must set in death. 'Tis hard. I feel the anguish of separating from those I love. But 'tis a father's honor calls to duty, a father's faith, a father's vow.

JEPHTHAH (*looking at RACHEL*). The sight is awful. Oh, agony, agony, agony!

AMMINADIB. Jephthah, if life must perish to fulfil your vow, take mine. To slay me would be an act of justice; and I would fall asleep kissing your hand in friendship. But spare the innocent.

JEPHTHAH. It cannot be. My oath is registered in the court of heaven; and can I lay perjury upon my soul? Yet, had God taken her from me by another means, my heart had bled itself to death in her removal: how, then, can I bear to despatch her by mine own hand? Still it must be done. It is God before all things, — God before my child. Sink, sink, ignoble self, with all thy fond desires and natural loves. Rise, rise, my soul, in obedience to the will of Heaven. I have opened my mouth unto the Lord; and I cannot go back. But my heart fails me as I gaze upon her; and I tremble in every limb. I cannot! It must be done! (O Heaven, help me!) Bid her prepare.

RACHEL. My father, had sickness seized your frame, I would have entered the fevered chamber, and tended your couch at the risk of my own life, that I might rescue yours. Had danger crossed your path, I would have stepped in between you and it, that you might be spared; and now that your honor before your God, your oath in heaven, demands my life, shall I withhold it? It is hard to die so young; but how can a child better yield her life than in defence of a father's honor?

AMMINADIB. Jephthah, pause and think, ere you

commit the deed. The oath is a rash one, made in the moment of exultant hope. Heaven may be propitiated in some other form, or forgive the vow.

JEPHTHAH. Away, tempter! I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. Bid her prepare.

RACHEL (*to SALOME and ESTHER*). My companions, farewell. A long adieu is now before us. My youthful nature shrinks at leaving earth and you. But my father calls: his oath in heaven bids me pass away. A pang, a faintness, a temporary loss of consciousness, and the door of earth will close upon me, and that of heaven, leading to peace and bliss and eternal friendship, open. Farewell; this hour an obedient child, the next an angel. I am ready.

SALOME (*falling on the neck of RACHEL*). O Rachel, stay!

ESTHER. True to the latest breath! Farewell: we shall meet again.

RACHEL. Father, my life is yours; and you present the dearest object of your love an offering to God. Tremble not. It grieves me more to see you weep than it does to serve you. Esther, place this bandage on my eyes: it will hide from my gaze the anguish of my father's countenance.

JEPHTHAH. O struggling heart! yield to thy duty in the claims of God. Bid nature cease its

throbbings; shake loose the shackles of a father's love; and be thou as a priest at the altar of high Heaven. 'Tis easy thus to call; but a father's nature still wrestles as the claim approaches, and I am unmanned. (*Falls again on the shoulders of AMMINADIB.*)

RACHEL (*kneeling by footlights*). All things are ready. Come, father, attend the claim of God.

JEPHTHAH (*rising*). It is as the voice of an angel: I must obey. (*Regains his courage; seizes a dagger from his girdle; heavy acting; twice passes to strike, and fails.*) This time ends the struggle. (*Raises the dagger to strike.*)

VOICE (*from without*). Hold!

JEPHTHAH. Who calls?

(*Enter HERMIT.*)

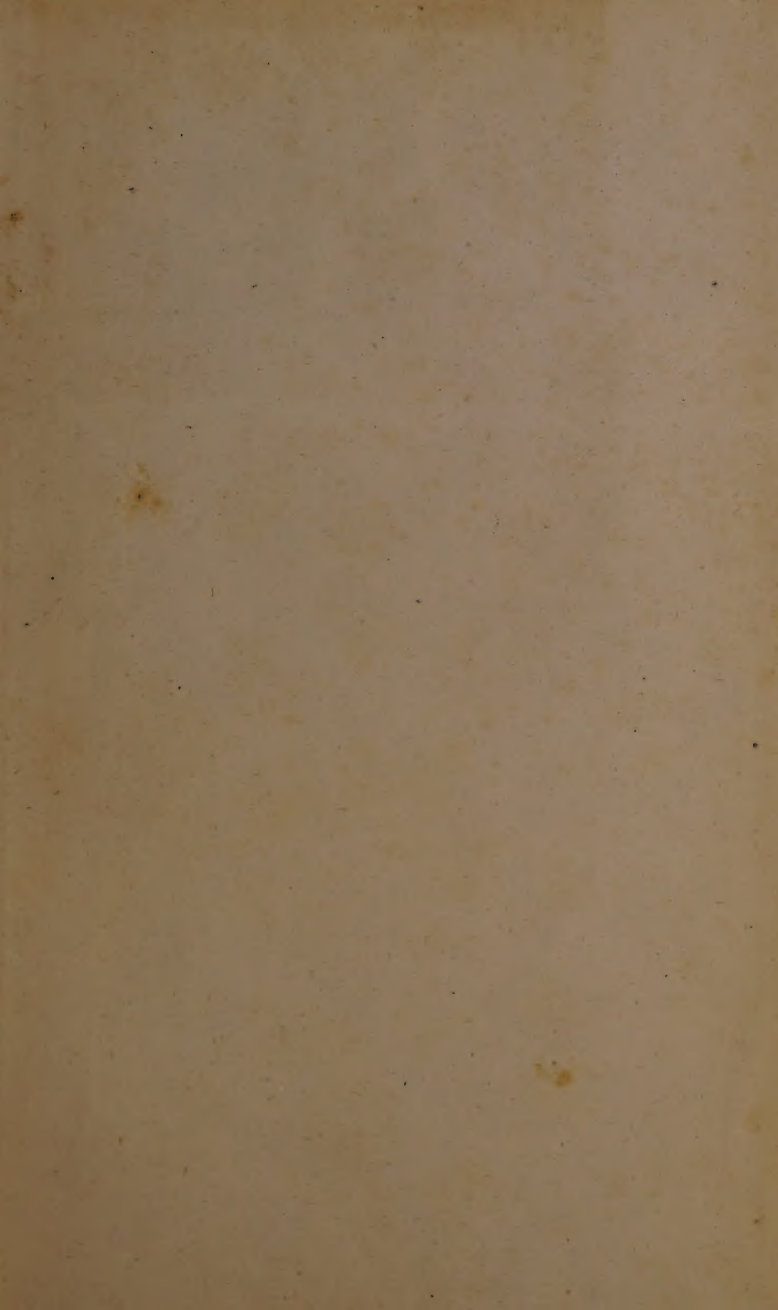
HERMIT. Forbear! I come as a messenger from God, to say thy vow is accepted with high Heaven as though the deed were done. Release thy child, and take a lamb, the substitute for human life, and offer it before thy God. For it is the divine decree that salvation shall come to man throughout all time by the sacrifice of the Lamb.

ALL. Hallelujah!

(*JEPHTHAH kneels by his daughter's side.*)

TABLEAU.

(*Curtain falls.*)



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